

القرآن الكريم
وكل الله هو العالينا

THE
ASCENDANT QUR'AN
Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture

VOLUME 2
Al-Baqarah: 142–214



Muhammad H. al-Āṣī



In the Name of Allah,
the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful

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THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT
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Allah (ﷻ) says in His noble Book,
“Verily, Allah and His Angels send salutations on the Apostle.
O You who are firmly committed [to Allah], you too [must]
send the most worthy salutations and blessings upon him.”
(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:56)

In launching this *tafsīr*, we beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless His final Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), all the Prophets (ﷺ) who preceded him, and all those who, despite great difficulty and sacrifice, sincerely follow in their footsteps from the *ṣāliḥūn*, the *ṣiddiqūn*, the *shuhadā'*, and *marḥūmūn*. We also beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless and amply reward those who have helped in the publication of this *tafsīr* in whatever capacity.

— The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought

Table of Contents

Volume 2

Publisher's Foreword	xi
Endnotes	xvii
Transliteration Chart	xix
Consonants	xix
Vowels and Diphthongs	xx
Tanwīn and Tashdīd	xx
Sūrah al-Baqarah, Part 2	1
Makkah, a Sanctuary from Racism and Nationalism	6
The Self-Important Yahūdī Penchant for Argumentation	19
The Central Ummah	22
Cleansing the <i>Qiblah</i> from Racial and Cultural Ownership	27

Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām Gives Makkah Distinction	46
The Divine Expression of Wisdom (<i>Ḥikmah</i>)	53
Historical European <i>Kufr</i> Rebranded as Atheism	65
The Relationship between <i>Ṣabr</i> and <i>Ṣalāh</i>	74
Fine-Tuning the Human Conception of <i>Dīn</i>	98
Clarifying the Significance of al- <i>Ṣafā</i> and al- <i>Marwaḥ</i>	105
The Jewish and Christian Scriptural Cover-up	111
Indications of Allah's (ﷻ) Presence in the Natural World	126
Worldly Authority Only Has Counterfeit Power	139
Satan and the Spectre of Ethnicity and National Identity	142
Qur'anic Guidelines for the Healthy Consumption of Meat	151
A Warning to Those Who Would Hide Scripture	167
The Qur'anic Expression of <i>Birr</i> (Virtue)	172
Some Building Blocks of <i>Taqwá</i>	189
<i>Qiṣāṣ</i> : the Final Word on Capital Punishment	194
<i>Waṣīyah</i> Is a Means of Consolidating Extended Family	214
Fasting: An Annual Opportunity to Build Up <i>Taqwá</i>	217
Allah (ﷻ) Responds to a Fasting Person's Supplication	232
Rules About How to Observe the Fast	234
Ramaḍān is Supposed to Mitigate Class Polarization	248
Maintaining Security and Hajj are Tightly Connected	255

The Qur'an Trumps Science as the Universal Reference Point	266
Jihad is the Vehicle That Carries the Islamic <i>Da'wah</i>	293
Hajj: A Symbol of the Universal Human Brotherhood . . .	312
Enhancing Man's Understanding of Human Nature	339
Two Personalities: One Truth	344
Peace and Security Come From Integrating with Allah (ﷻ)	358
Satan and the Fear of Drifting into Poverty	369
Institutional Racism and the Subversion of Human Unity	390
Endnotes	410
Glossary	487
General Index	505
Index of Arabic Words	521

Publisher's Foreword

The edifice of an Islamic civilization can only be erected if its values are rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an, and the objectives of the Sunnah and Sīrah of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). No committed Muslim would disagree but the question of how we go about rebuilding it is not as straightforward as it may sound. The Qur'an must be studied in much greater depth than what most Muslims are used to doing at present: reading it merely for the undoubted blessings it brings. We must study the Qur'an to derive lessons for the arduous struggle in life. As the eternal Word of Allah (ﷻ) is thoughtfully engaged, it yields ever deeper insights. Our understanding is also influenced by the peculiar circumstances of the contemporary situation. This is not to suggest (*nastaghfir-allāh*) that its laws are not immutable or permanent but to emphasize the fact that certain aspects compared to others emerge with greater clarity depending on the requirements of each generation. We live in difficult, troubled, and unsettled times; Muslims are under attack almost everywhere. They are struggling to confront these challenges with varying degrees of success. How the Muslim response can be made more effective is a question we must address.

And to guide the fulfillment of our weighty responsibility on earth, the Qur'an and the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah and Sīrah are the essential milestones for our journey.

Islam is supposed to be the dominant paradigm in the world but that is not the case today despite Allah (ﷻ) saying in His glorious Book,

He it is who has sent forth His Apostle with the [task of spreading] guidance and the *dīn* of truth, to the end that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] systems of life — however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity/authority to any beside Allah (9:33; 61:09).

The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) made Islam dominant in a society that was steeped in *jāhiliyah*. He brought his people out of darkness within the short period of 23 years. The Arabians who had prided on their primitive savagery by indulging in pillage and murder became the most upright, honest, and inspiring people on earth. By following closely the teachings of the Qur'an, they established a powerful civilization that lasted nearly 1,000 years despite the gradual estrangement of their representative political mechanisms away from the pristine purity of Islam's teachings after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). Successive generations of Muslims have struggled to reassert the power of Islam. This is a challenge Muslims have faced in every generation.

How we reassert the power of Islam once again will depend on the clarity of our thought and the level of our commitment. The prerequisite for this is a much clearer understanding of the noble Book. Imam Muḥammad al-Āṣī's *tafsīr*, *The Ascendant Qur'an: Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture*, seeks to achieve just that. It aims to broaden our understanding of the divine message by resuscitating within us the criterion quality of the Qur'an so that we can measure the wayward world around us according to an immutable reference point. By sustaining Qur'anic references with their modern personifications and contemporary circumstances,

this work enables us to begin to apply valuable lessons both in our individual as well as collective lives, thereby bringing us into conformity with Allah's (ﷻ) commands in a seemingly impossible situation. We are grateful to Allah (ﷻ) for His Mercy and Grace in helping us spread His message in a way that English-speaking Muslims can relate to in their daily lives.

One of the most widely heard comments after the first volume of this *tafsīr* was published in Jumādā al-Ūlā 1429AH (2008CE) was: how soon will the other volumes follow? This second volume and subsequent volumes to come out soon, *inshā'allāh*, address this question. Several reasons may have prompted this question. An important one is our own indication that there would be at least 20 volumes of this *tafsīr* to cover the entire Qur'an. We hope those that asked about subsequent volumes were anxious to get them as soon as possible since the first volume helped explain the meanings of the noble Book in a way that made its message relate directly to our contemporary situation. Many misconceptions that may have crept into the meaning of the Qur'an as a result of poor translation or the inappropriate choice of suitable English words have been clarified by Imam al-Āṣī to eliminate ambiguity; many other concepts will, *inshā'allāh* become clearer as subsequent volumes are published. There may perhaps have been other reasons as well but we need not delve into them. For us the most important task is to produce succeeding volumes as quickly as possible so that Muslims eager to engage the noble Book can do so secure in the knowledge that the work is progressing satisfactorily.

Writing a *tafsīr* of the Qur'an is a highly specialized field; it cannot be taken lightly but Imam al-Āṣī is well suited to this task given his extensive study and deep understanding of the noble Qur'an as would be evident to those who have studied the first volume. Such work, however, requires careful review. It must be borne in mind that this material has been serialized over many years in the *Crescent International* news magazine, which covers the goings-on of the Islamic movement. The requirements of a magazine are quite different from those of a book; the material has to be extensively edited to suit a book format. The initial editing of the *tafsīr*

serials appearing in *Crescent International* was done by London-based Iqbal Siddiqui who did a thorough and commendable job of tightening up sentences and making sure that the content flows smoothly. To put it into book form, Afeef Khan has edited it again and also provided extensive endnotes in consultation with Imam al-ʿĀṣī. We have also taken into consideration the feedback we received following publication of the first volume, especially regarding endnotes, to ensure that they are clear, comprehensive and easily followed.¹

Initially we had calculated that the remainder of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (*āyāt* 142–286) would be covered in the second volume. When the material was put together it became clear that a single volume would become too bulky. We therefore decided to publish the rest of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* in two volumes with Volume 2 covering *āyāt* 142–214 and Volume 3, the balance from *āyāt* 215–286. This has resulted in making each of the three volumes thus far completed of about equal size. We have deliberately avoided following the *juzʿ* pattern since such a division while convenient for the purpose of recitation — such as during the month of Ramaḍān, in which the well-known 30 *juzʿs* are recited during the *tarāwīḥ* congregation — does not easily lend itself to studying the subject matter of the Qurʾan. The Qurʾan’s natural arrangement is in *sūrah*s, there being 114 in all, ranging in length from three *āyāt* for the shortest *sūrah*s, *al-Kawthar* and *an-Naṣr*, to 286 *āyāt* for the longest *sūrah*, *al-Baqarah*. The word *sūrah* is often translated as *chapter* but secular word choices often limit the Qurʾanic lexicon and could lead to confusion. Derived from the noun *sūr*, which means an enclosure or wall, the literal word *sūrah* implies something that is self-contained and thus each *sūrah* of the Qurʾan must be treated as such. Some *sūrah*s, like the second *sūrah*, *al-Baqarah*, are spread over multiple *juzʿs*, and if the *tafsīr* was divided according to the *juzʿ* definition, there would be a danger of losing the *sūrah*’s continuity. Most *sūrah*s, barring the shorter ones, also deal with multiple themes with *āyāt* grouped together to reflect or explain a particular theme. These themes often carry over from one *juzʿ* to another. In our judgement, therefore, the explanation of themes in the original

sūrah format of the Qur'an is a more suitable way to understand the meanings of the noble Book, and understanding is a key issue with this project. This is why Imam al-Āṣī has taken a non-traditional approach with this *tafsīr*.

In the foreword to the first volume, we had said, "It was in South Africa that the idea of this *tafsīr* was first proposed. The year was 1996 and *Crescent International* had just held a highly successful international conference on the theme, *Creating a New Civilization of Islam...* it was [during one of] the informal discussions after formal conference sessions... that some Muslim youth involved in the Qur'an Study Group suggested to Imam al-Āṣī to consider writing a [contemporary] *tafsīr* of the Qur'an." This needs clarification. When the first volume of the *tafsīr* was printed in 2008, associates of the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT) in South Africa pointed out to this writer that the late Dr. Kalim Siddiqui was intimately involved in the decision to launch the *tafsīr* project 12 years earlier. I was not privy to this information until our discussion on the subject in South Africa last year.

Dr. Kalim Siddiqui, already a heart patient who only a few months earlier had undergone a second bypass operation in England, suddenly became quite ill after his return to Pretoria from a trip to Botswana on April 15, 1996. He was due to fly back to London the following evening but doctors advised against travel until his condition stabilized. He was rebooked for April 19th while this writer flew out of Johannesburg on April 16th, heading for Toronto. After a day's rest and heavy doses of medication, Dr. Siddiqui felt much better. There was a general feeling that he had over-exerted himself and that the rest did him much good. In the few additional days before his new scheduled departure date, Dr. Siddiqui, the ICIT associates, and Imam al-Āṣī met to discuss the possibility of working on the *tafsīr*. Dr. Siddiqui asked Imam al-Āṣī to undertake the project telling him that he was the most suitable person for this task. Unknown to this writer, an agreement to this effect was concluded and a day later, on April 18, 1996, Dr. Siddiqui suddenly passed away at *maghrib* time. During those extremely difficult and chaotic days, it was virtually impossible to

gather all the information or discuss such matters. We were all consumed by the sudden death of Dr. Siddiqui and became engrossed in dealing with the aftermath of the tragedy.

Thus, for the record, it must be stated that it was at the insistence of Dr. Kalim Siddiqui that Imam al-‘Āṣī launched into writing this *tafsīr* that has now, *al-ḥamdu lillāh*, progressed considerably. Much more could be said about the momentum that was generated by Dr. Siddiqui in establishing the Muslim Institute, in organizing the activities which brought us all together, in providing the intellectual force which laid the foundation for future work, and in creating an open forum in which his and astute Muslims’ political acumen could have a voice. Dr. Siddiqui’s commitment and work, indeed the legacy he has left behind, has been embodied in the publication of *The Ascendant Qur’an*, and the continued expansion of ICIT’s activities. A lot more needs to be done, however, and as we bring out additional volumes, we are aware that the pressure on us — the *mufasssīr*, editors, and publisher — will increase. We pray to Allah (ﷻ) to enable us to fulfill this task as expeditiously as possible and to His satisfaction.

We have stated before (*Crescent International*, May 2008) that the noble Qur’an cannot be accurately translated into other languages, especially English, since the latter is rooted in a secular culture and value-system and is not adequately equipped to convey the divine message. Thus, an English translation of the Qur’an suffers from both language deficiency as well as space limitation. The meanings inherent in the divine message are so profound that they cannot be adequately or accurately communicated through the medium of the English language. As the divine word of Allah (ﷻ), the Qur’an’s meanings become clearer as human knowledge expands. Thus, in order to get as close to the divine message as possible, Muslims must have access to a *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur’an. A *tafsīr* not only provides a translation but also sheds light on the circumstances in which the *āyāt* of the Qur’an were revealed providing context to their meaning. Imam al-‘Āṣī does more: he relates the application of Qur’anic *āyāt* to the contemporary situation so that Muslims, as well as non-Muslims, are able to see how the

divine message is essential to help us overcome the present bleak situation facing humanity.

We are acutely aware of the challenges that confront us and our own limitations in meeting them. We seek Allah's (ﷻ) guidance and the help and support of our friends and well-wishers to realize these dreams. A project of this kind cannot be realized without the help and support of a very large number of people. Some we have mentioned; others wish to remain anonymous. We pray to Allah (ﷻ) to reward all those who have or continue to help with this noble task. Producing a *tafsīr* is only the first step; getting it into the hands of Muslims worldwide is another challenge that we must address before they are able to implement its teachings in their lives. We must all do what is in our capacity and pray to Allah (ﷻ) to accept these humble efforts from us. *Āmīn*.

Zafar Bangash

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16 Jumādā al-Ūlā 1430AH (5-11-2009)

Endnotes

- 1 In writing *The Ascendant Qur'an*, the *mufasssīr*, Imam al-Āṣī, has formally consulted with up to 22 *tafsīrs* as references from the compendium of previous *tafsīr* literature. One, a few, or all of the following *tafsīrs*, in which the original hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) or sayings of other individuals may be found, have been utilized. Imam al-Āṣī chose the first five of these because they have captured and consolidated the information in the previously well-known *tafsīrs* including al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, and al-Rāzī. Secondly, the combination of these five delved more deeply into ideas that attempted to grasp the full meaning of the Qur'anic discourse.

Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., 6 vol.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm (better known as Tafsīr al-Manār)*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'rifaḥ, 1414AH), 12 vol.

Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), 1st ed., 32 vol.

'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1397AH), 3rd ed., 20 vol.

Muḥammad al-Ṭāhīr ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr (better known as Tafsīr ibn 'Āshūr)*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'assasah al-Tārīkh, 1420AH), 1st ed., 29 vol.

Other *tafsīrs* that were consulted but not referenced as extensively include the following four,

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī (better known as Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān)*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1412AH), 12 vol.

Abū al-Qāsim Jār-Allāh Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī al-Khawārizmī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr), 4 vol.

Abū al-Faḍl Shahāb al-Dīn al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab'i al-Mathānī*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr, 1414AH), 16 vol.

Muṣṭafā al-Ḥiṣūn al-Manṣūrī (edited by Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī), *Al-Muqṭaṭaf min 'Uyūn al-Tafāsīr*. (Damascus, Syria: Dār al-Qalam, 1416AH), 5 vol.

Transliteration Chart

Consonants

أ	none (initial)	ض	ḍ
ؤ	' (medial or final)	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	ة	ḥ
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Vowels and Diphthongs

اَ	a	اَ	ā	اِي	á
اُ	u	آ	ā	اِي	ay
اِ	i	اُو	ū	اُو	aw
		اِي	ī		

Tanwīn and Tashdīd

اَ	an	اِي	ayy	اُو	aww
اِي	an	اُو	ūw	ف	ff
اِ	un	اِي	īy (medial)	ش	shsh
اِ	in	اِي	ī (final)	ر	rr

2

Sūrah al-Baqarah, Part 2

The Cow

The second part of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, from *āyāt* 142–214, comprises much of the second *juz'* of the Qur'an, while the remainder of the *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, through *āyah* 286, make up a little less than half of the third *juz'*.¹ This part concentrates on the development and consolidation of the Islamic *jamā'ah* as it prepares to assume the responsibilities of Allah's (ﷻ) covenant and trust. This is the same covenant that the Israelis failed to uphold. For this reason the Israeli flunkies and their admirers have been historically keen on thwarting the ideological and political content of the religious and moral order, which has been the main purpose of divine communication to man from time immemorial.

It is because of the social and philosophical content of Allah's (ﷻ) scripture that secularism has been, and still is, systematically presented as the “clean” alternative to a religion that would otherwise have to tarnish and bloody itself with the “dirty” affairs of political man and “deviant” human nature. The highest decibels of secularism in the world ring in Muslim minds and in Muslim lands because only the Muslims, of all humanity, are in possession of the Scripture that has not been bent out of shape like other scriptures.

The most vociferous arguments against the Islamic trust and covenant come from the Israelis. Their historical grudge is specifically inimical to those “others” — that is, the Muslims — who picked up the baton from where the Israelis dropped it. By depoliticizing the covenant, these pompous Israeli deserters hope to throw the Muslims off course. They have been partially successful in this feat over the last century, since their meeting in Basle, Switzerland, where they decided to forge ahead with plans to implant a Zionist state in Palestine.² Such an objective, if achieved, would not only displace the Palestinians physically but also (and this is the most damaging part of their project) displace the Muslims historically and ideologically.

In this volume of the master Scripture, the Qur’an, the floodlights are focused on the counter-covenant conduct of the historical Israelis, as well as of all those who have joined the Israeli campaign to deflect the Muslims from the heavenly trust of Allah’s (ﷻ) master-plan for man on earth. The quotable Qur’an also imparts words of advice to the new covenant bearers, enabling them to avoid the pitfalls and mistakes of the historical Israelis.

This part of the character-building Qur’an confers the necessary instructions upon the Islamic nucleus that shall become the empowered Ummah,³ entrusted to carry Allah’s (ﷻ) trust until the forces of evil are decisively defeated. The contents of this volume delineate the collective character of the Ummah: its self-reliant, self-respecting character, its independent *qiblah*, and its unique blend of morality and legality that endorses bygone scriptures and is inclusive of all prior revelations. The Qur’an affirms, integrates and certifies earlier scriptures and revelations. As the *āyāt* fine-tune the community characteristics of the human power base of Islam, they single out these committed Muslims with their unique concepts of life and existence. These *āyāt* instill in them the unique relationship between Allah (ﷻ), the Sustainer, and Muslims, the sustained. In this relationship, committed Muslims function in a capacity of refrain and sacrifice; they refrain from hoarding wealth and possessions while sacrificing their time and acquisitions for Allah (ﷻ). They part with emotional attachments and shed mis-

behavior and misconduct. They prefer to give rather than to receive. They are the obedient subjects of the divine command — a command that is explicated in the supervising Qur'an and in the directives of the impeccable Messenger (ﷺ). All of this is done with pure satisfaction and total confidence. This human power base of Islam entertains no doubt whatsoever about its strong and spirited relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

As these *āyāt* develop and hone an Ummah, free from external control and constraint, they speak of Muslims with a *qiblah* of their own. This is intended to designate the Muslims as the Ummah of counterbalance and redress (*ummatan wasatā*, 2:143). In this position the members of this Ummah become witnesses and observers of other social orders,⁴ while Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) becomes the witness and observer over the Ummah.

In this leading position, the Muslim Ummah takes the front line of social and political emancipation in world affairs; it pioneers and influences the course of events everywhere. Never is the Ummah a local or regional power; it is by definition a supranational and transnational leading world power. This does not come easily: committed Muslims are required to withstand and tolerate all the pressures that come with their collective and consolidated world-power status. By doing so the Muslims are setting an example and carving a model for other human societies, nations and populations. As they reach this advanced stage of *role-model* Ummah, the Muslims will have to sacrifice life and livelihood, money and men, property and possessions. And in the process of realizing this Ummah, they will have no other option but to become confident and cooperative with Allah's (ﷻ) decisions, His allocations, and His long-range plan.

After this, the *āyāt* begin to polish the Islamic commitment, it being the mainstay of the historical covenant with Allah (ﷻ). They state that virtue is measured by its ability to induce men to do the right and proper things; virtue is not the mechanical approach to prayers by facing toward the east or the west. This issue had to be addressed because the Yahūd were imposing their agenda on the public mind. These Yahūd were demonstrating their proven histor-

ical character by their equivocal and argumentative flirtations with the truth for the purpose of aborting its value. As they erroneously regarded themselves to be the inheritors of divine communication, they could not countenance the “gentiles” or “goyim” showing any interest and conviction in the godly truth on earth. The Yahūd also have an ancient habit of downplaying the truth by withholding pertinent facts that substantiate it. Most of the *āyāt* in this section address the change of *qiblah* because it is one of those issues that the Yahūd opportunistically manipulated to cause psychological damage and social chaos within the growing Muslim community.

Then the discourse goes on to outline the practical arrangements, rites, and rituals that together are the mainstay of the Ummah. These form the internal fabric of the Ummah, sustaining it, especially in times of challenge and hardship. This section elucidates the law of retribution; the procedures for inheritance; the fasting mandate; some rules about warfare during the *months of sanctity* (*al-ashhur al-hurum*) and in the *masjid of sanctity* (*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*); and finally ends with the Hajj mandate. All these issues are tied into the divine doctrinal belief and the close relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

At the end of this volume, Allah (ﷻ) gives man a keen insight into the inner workings of human nature, in a way that only He who created it could. He shows man how vanity, feelings of insecurity, the fear of poverty, and institutional racism are all closely linked to a set of fears that signal man’s disintegration from the commanding divine presence. Man is apprised of the fact that to the extent his personality comes to be dominated by fear, his innate confidence can be eroded by the seductions of Satan, and the self-serving suggestions of those who pretend to rival Allah (ﷻ). In the end, man learns that no uncertainty resulting from imposed fears is too hard to manage when man’s immediate situational knowledge is complemented by the certitude of Allah’s (ﷻ) faultless words.

When this volume along with the preceding one is closely analyzed, the range of battle-lines within which the Qur’an was operating can be more easily recognized. The reader gets a focus on the objective the Qur’an is working toward as it builds the Ummah

bit by bit. The battle-ground where the Qur'an was operating, and continues to operate, is one that is infested with all types of intrusion, machination, confusion, false representation, and lies. With all this comes the frailty and vulnerability of human nature, as it lends itself to sedition and seduction. On this battlefield the Qur'an goes right to the heart and mind, to build a God-given concept that sustains the Ummah — an *ummaḥ* that shall become the inheriting Ummah of the earth, the Ummah that chaperones, leads and pioneers the way for the rest of humanity.

The miracle of this Qur'an, not unlike what it did hundreds of years ago, is that it uses the same words to reconstruct today's Muslims. What was good for human beings and human nature then is good for human beings and human nature now; and what was bad for human beings and human nature then is bad for them now. The Qur'an has always had its enemies, even though it is Allah's (ﷻ) eternal and unalterable word. It had enemies when the Prophet (ﷺ) was present, and it has present-day enemies even though he is no longer here. Therefore the Qur'an is almost always located in a war zone — not because the Qur'an is hostile to humans, but because some humans are antagonistic to the Qur'an. And in this historic continuum of opposition to the Qur'an, it turns out that the Qur'an's historical and traditional enemies have their extensions in contemporary times.

The techniques and methods of these adversaries of the Qur'an always spring from the same psychological grounds. Some forms and cosmetics may change from time to time, but the thrust of their harangues, vitriol and bombastic declarations are still one in essence. Today's Muslims are as much in need of Qur'anic insight into the nature of the enemy as were the first generation of Muslims. Indeed, Muslims are probably in much greater need of the soothing and saving words of the Qur'an now than ever before, as anti-Muslim forces have gained such experience in thwarting any Islamic social and political consolidation. In our current times we have some "Islamists" who have blurred the line between *īmān* and *kufir*; some of these "Islamists" want to join the American system, expecting and then demanding help from the *kāfirs* for their own "Islamic" causes!⁵

Beyond all this Islamist mumbo-jumbo, the Qur'an remains the guiding light, conclusively and decisively drawing the line between its adherents and its adversaries. The Qur'an remains the only mental contact with Allah (ﷻ) that has the capacity to reshape the Ummah in a way that pleases Allah (ﷻ), while disturbing His opponents. The Qur'an carries the unadulterated vision that shall deliver the committed Muslims as they become more and more absorbed with real issues, and less preoccupied with the spiritual psychosis, which has "guru-ized" Islam. The Qur'an will remain the inspirational source and the legal reference out of which we, the committed Muslims, will rebuild our communities and societies. The more Allah's (ﷻ) words are at work with us when we are in the heat of battle, the more we shall persevere and the more we shall overcome. This is the Qur'anic miracle that goes undetected by the crass materialists in their waywardness.

Makkah, a Sanctuary from Racism and Nationalism

The first lesson in the second volume of the Qur'an begins with *āyah* 2:142 and ends with 2:152. This lesson, taken as a whole, details for us the issue of the *qiblah*, and how it was relocated or redirected. There were some circumstantial issues involved. There are also the Yahūdī hands that worked to confuse the Muslims and undermine the growing Islamic reality at the time. The Qur'an, in this course, served to remedy the effects of Yahūdī propaganda.

- (2:142) From among people, the fools will say, "What has turned them away from their *qiblah* which they have hitherto observed?" Say, "Allah's is the east and the west; He guides whom He wills to a straight way."
- (2:143) And thus have We willed you to be an equitable Ummah, so that [with your lifetime experiences] you become attestants to other peoples, and the Apostle becomes a witness over you. And We have not rendered a previous

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهُمْ عَن قِبَلِهِمُ الَّذِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهِمْ قُلْ
 لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٢﴾
 وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
 وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا
 إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّن يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِن كَانَتْ
 لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ
 اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾ قَدْ زَرَى تَقَلَّبَ وَجْهَكَ فِي
 السَّمَاءِ فَلتَوَلَّيْتَكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ
 الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
 الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ
 ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَلَئِن آتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ
 وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتِهِمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَئِن
 اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذَا
 لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ الَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا
 يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْفُرُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٍ هُوَ
 مُوَلِّئُهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ
 اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَمَنْ حَيْثُ حَرَجْتَ فَأَوَّلِ وَجْهِكَ
 سَطَرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا
 تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ وَمَنْ حَيْثُ حَرَجْتَ فَأَوَّلِ وَجْهِكَ سَطَرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
 وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ
 حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي ۗ وَلِأْتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي
 عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا
 مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ
 وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ فَأَذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ
 وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

qiblah for you [O Prophet] except to distinguish those who follow the Apostle from those who are inclined to retreat [into tradition]. This was a hard test indeed except for those whom Allah has guided; for Allah does not disregard your *īmān*. Surely Allah is most compassionate toward man, very beneficent.

- (2:144) We have seen you [O Prophet] turn your face toward the sky [for guidance]; and now We shall indeed

have you turn to a *qiblah* which will fulfill your hope. Turn, then, your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it [in *ṣalāh*]. And, verily, those who have received earlier scriptures know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer; and Allah is not oblivious of what they do.

- (2:145) And yet, even if you were to place all evidence before those who received earlier scriptures, they would not adopt your *qiblah*; and neither are you to latch onto their *qiblah*, nor even are they abiding by each others' *qiblah*. And if you [O Muhammad] should follow their erring views after all the knowledge that has come unto you, you would surely be among the offenders.
- (2:146) People of earlier scriptures know it [scripture] as they know their own children; but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the truth...
- (2:147) The truth is from your Sustainer. Be not, then, among the vacillators;
- (2:148) For every one has a direction of his own to which he turns. Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, Allah will gather you all unto Himself, for, verily, Allah overpowers everything.
- (2:149) Thus, from wherever you may move forward, turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām for, behold, this [commandment] comes in truth from your Sustainer; and Allah is not unenlightened of what you do.
- (2:150) Hence, from wherever you may come forth, turn your face [in devout orientation] toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it, so that people should have no [valid] argument against you unless they are bent on unfairness. And hold not them in awe, but stand in awe of Me, [and obey Me,] so that I may bestow upon you the full measure of My blessings, and that you might be guided.
- (2:151) Likewise, We have sent unto you an apostle from among yourselves to impart to you Our involvement [in

your world], and to cause you to grow in prudence, and to teach you scripture and wisdom, and to teach you that which you knew not.

- (2:152) So remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful unto Me, and deny Me not (al-Baqarah:142–152).

The information concerning this pivotal issue in scriptural history is that before the Prophet (ﷺ) migrated from Makkah to Madinah, and during the few years preceding the Hijrah, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray facing toward the monument (rock) in al-Quds (Jerusalem). But he felt that the Ka'bah, the *qiblah* of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (عليهما السلام), would be a better direction for *ṣalāh*. Sometimes he would go south of the Ka'bah to offer his *ṣalāh*, thus facing both the Ka'bah and al-Quds. The Qur'an does not mention any dates or times delineating exactly when this most significant event happened. The *āyāt* here simply outline the defining event of the *qiblah*'s transposition from al-Quds to Makkah. We know from the *Sīrah* literature that this took place 16 or 17 months after the Hijrah.

There is also evidence from the *Sīrah* that the Muslims, while still in Makkah, were directing themselves toward the Ka'bah during their *ṣalāh* (the *ṣalāh* was ordained several years after the Prophet (ﷺ) was first commissioned). At the time in Makkah, this Ka'bah-centric direction of *ṣalāh* was not a Qur'anic command. But then after the Hijrah, when the Muslims moved north to Madinah, there was a non-Qur'anic divine order to the Prophet (ﷺ) to continue praying toward al-Quds during *ṣalāh*. Eventually came the Qur'anic instruction, **“And now We shall indeed make you turn in a direction which will fulfill your desire. Turn, then, your face toward the Inviolable Masjid; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it [in *ṣalāh*]” (2:144).** The directive in this *āyah* formally ended all previous practice of praying toward al-Quds.

One of the issues involved in this change of *qiblah* is the fact that people of current scripture at the time (Jews and Christians) were all praying toward Jerusalem. The fact that the Muslims were “latecomers to this *qiblah*” was one of the issues that caused the Yahūd to feel superior to the Muslims, and gave them an excuse to

balk at becoming Muslims. The fact that Muhammad (ﷺ) and his followers were facing toward the “Yahūdī” Jerusalem in their prayers was apparently proof positive, to them, that the Yahūd are the true people of scripture, and that the Yahūdī capital of Israel, situated roughly in the center of the Judean Mountains, was adopted by Muhammad (ﷺ) to tag along with the Yahūdī tradition. The gist of all this Yahūdī propaganda was, in effect, to say that it would be better for Muhammad (ﷺ) to fall in line with the Jewish religion instead of hopelessly trying to “convert” Yahūd to Allah (ﷻ)!

As this scenario was unfolding, it was very hard for the Arabians who became Muslims, who before Islam had recognized the sanctity of the Inviolable Masjid and accepted it as their *qiblah*, to change to Jerusalem, especially when they had long been taunted by the Yahūd that Jerusalem is the true and only *qiblah*. Now the Yahūd turned around and told the Arabs, “We told you so!”

Throughout this Yahūdī campaign, the Prophet (ﷺ) would look to the heavens, awaiting a divine answer to this Yahūdī challenge. Then from Allah (ﷻ) came these words of comfort and ease,

We have seen you [O Prophet] often turn your face toward heaven [for guidance]; and now indeed We shall make you turn in a direction which will fulfill your desire. Turn, then, your face toward the Inviolable Masjid; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it [in *ṣalāh*] (2:144).

This *āyah* was revealed about 16 months after the Hijrah. When the Qur’anic words redirected the Muslims from praying toward al-Quds to praying toward the Ka’bah, some Muslims were actually obliged to redirect themselves in the middle of their *ṣalāh* — a turn of 180 degrees from a northerly direction (Jerusalem) to a southerly one (Makkah). These Muslims actually prayed the opening *rak’ahs* toward Masjid al-Aqṣá and then prayed the finishing *rak’ahs*, of the same *ṣalāh*, toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.

At this critical juncture, Yahūd moved in with their bitter and divisive words. How dare Muhammad (ﷺ) and his Islamic commu-

nity change from Jerusalem (their *qiblah*) to Makkah (Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) holy of holies)? This Islamic move was a blow to their ancestral monopoly of scripture and covenant. It cut them off from their historical, hierarchical Kodashim (*muqaddasāt*), and so could not be tolerated by Yahūd, who immediately began a campaign to destabilize this Islamic initiative. They tried to drive a wedge between the rank and file Muslims and the leadership of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ). From this tactical move they moved to a broader strategy of trying to undermine the Muslims' faith in their divine doctrinal belief.

In effect, the Yahūd posed the conundrum: you Muslims were praying toward Jerusalem for all this time and now it turns out that Jerusalem was not the right *qiblah* all along, then in actual fact you have spent one-and-a-half years with invalid *ṣalāh* because Jerusalem, as your prophet is now saying, was not the real *qiblah*; but then, if Jerusalem is the authentic *qiblah* then your turning to Makkah is wrong; and now if you do turn to Makkah then all your *ṣalāhs* henceforth are null and void. Whatever you Muslims decide to do, you should realize by now that this confusion has no divine origins. This type of reorientation can never come from God. Therefore, you Muslims should have enough common sense to realize by now that Muhammad (ﷺ) is not a recipient of divine revelation!

This malicious campaign took its toll on the Muslim rank and file; this is verified by the sequence of *āyāt* in the Qur'an that had to address the issue and set the record straight. The two sections beginning with *āyah*, "What We override or annul of *āyāt*..." (2:106) in the first *juz'* and the first lesson in this *juz'*, are all dedicated by Allah (ﷻ) to countering and neutralizing this Yahūdī "logic." We will encounter very shortly the Qur'an's superb handling of this Yahūdī intrigue and intrusion into Islamic affairs.

At this point, let us consider why the Muslims have a *qiblah* of their own. This *qiblah* autonomy is one of the most significant developments in defining relations between Muslims on the one hand, and the Yahūd and Yahūdī Christians on the other. The ramifications of this event will last until both Muslims and their scriptural adversaries, primarily the Yahūd, understand that human

devotion to Allah (ﷻ) does not tolerate two *qiblahs* or multiple *qiblahs*. This lesson should also be of particular interest to Muslims of today, who should understand that their self-reliant and autonomous *qiblah* places them at the cutting edge of human social progress. No social or behavioral theories or litanies by the Yahūd or the Christians should be allowed to detract from this fact.

The first thing to understand in this *qiblah* leadership assignment by Allah (ﷻ) to the Muslims is the fact that those early Muslims had first had to change their *qiblah* from the Ka'bah in Makkah to the remote *masjid* in al-Quds (Jerusalem). This was no small task. This initial change of *qiblah* was to instill in the first generation of dedicated Muslims a lesson that should not be ignored or forgotten by the Islamic generations that follow, especially now that Makkah and al-Quds are once again central emotional and political issues to all sincere Muslims and their real enemies. There is a lesson to be learned from the decentralizing of Makkah and the centralizing of al-Quds in the intimate man-to-God relationship (*ṣalāh*), especially in the Arabian peninsula of the Muhammadi period. This lesson is encapsulated by the *āyah*, **“And We have not rendered a previous *qiblah* for you [O Prophet] except to distinguish those who follow the Apostle from those who are inclined to retreat [into tradition]” (2:143).**

The Arabians held the House of Allah (ﷻ) in Makkah in high esteem. To translate their feelings about it into the idiom of our present day, we may say that the House of Allah (ﷻ) was to the Arabians of that time a symbol of national pride and glory. Makkah to those Arabians was like Washington to the Americans, or the Vatican to the Catholics, today; and the Ka'bah was to them like the White House to the Americans or the Holy Sepulcher to the Christians.

This Arabian attachment to Makkah and the Ka'bah was a matter of custom, tradition and culture. But Islam should be above customs, traditions and cultures. The Arabians who became Muslims had to purge their minds and their psyches of their previous customs, traditions, and culture. This transfer of the *qiblah* from Makkah to al-Quds was a test for the Muslims, to show that they

could make the transition from culture to covenant, from tradition to *taqwá*, and from customs to commitment.

These Arabs had to shed their “national” pride by abandoning Makkah and embracing al-Quds. All the history and folklore associated with Makkah in the pre-Islamic Arabian mind and conscience had to be left behind. Makkah cannot and must not carry tribal, racial, or nationalistic baggage. There can be no Qurayshī jingoism or Arabian chauvinism associated with Makkah. These Muslims had to go through a denationalization test: their cultural capital and their ethnic center had to become their capital without culture and their epicenter without racial differentiations. Makkah had to be cleansed from all “isms” so that it could become the *qiblah* that it was meant to be.

One can imagine what this meant to these souls. Some of them had to be “ripped” away from Makkah and its inviolable House. Where should they turn now? What is Allah’s (ﷻ) choice for their new *qiblah*? Allah (ﷻ) chose for these developing souls — for a short period of time — Masjid al-Aqṣá. This new focus on Masjid al-Aqṣá served as an emotional release from their previous attachment to Makkah. It served to free them of their tribal ties to Makkah. It would also isolate those who failed to follow through in this exercise, which demands adherence to the Prophet (ﷺ) in whatever he has to do. This transpositioning from Makkah to Jerusalem would weed out those who were incapable of separating geography, nationalism, ethnicity, and culture from Allah’s (ﷻ) covenant, or those who would graft these elements onto Islam. This new Islamic beginning demanded a generation belonging to the Prophet (ﷺ) who were liberated from the cultural and racial nuances that might prove damaging in the years to come.

While the Muslims were enduring the emotional and psychological adjustment to a new but equally valid *qiblah*, which constituted a necessary, albeit difficult, maturation from being local Arabians to becoming universal Muslims, Yahūd began to interfere with this delicate process and used the occasion to prove “their own” point. It was at this exquisitely fine and subtle moment in time, when Makkah was being raised above the notions of nation-

alism and ethnicism, that the Yahūd were resuscitating their history and heritage of an exclusivist and nationalist (hence Israeli) Jerusalem. In the process, they were conveying the impression that these Muslims, by adopting Jerusalem as a *qiblah*, are some johnny-come-latelies or even fraudulent intruders. It took 16 months or so for the Muslims to see Makkah in a new light: transnational, transcultural, and trans-Arabian. Conversely, it took the Yahūd the same period to prove their understanding of Jerusalem as cultural, nationalist, and exclusively Yahūdī-Israeli.

When this polarity was well recognized, the Muslims were ordered by Allah (ﷻ) to adopt Makkah as the political, ideological and religious focus for themselves and all Muslims until the end of time. Makkah was completely redefined. It no longer stood for a particular culture and nationality, with all the drawbacks that position entails. Makkah's new definition in the minds of these Muslims was as a sanctuary dedicated by Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (ﷺ) to the sole purpose of serving and striving for Allah (ﷻ). Makkah is a city constructed in response to Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) prayer that from it should rise a prophet of his seed who would bring man to Allah's (ﷻ) will on earth (Islam). This was the incomplete task of Ibrāhīm and his descendants (ﷺ): the coming of the final Prophet (ﷺ) who would complete the history of revelation and renew the history of dedication.

Makkah was destined to become the place where the history of revelation is rooted. It is where Ibrāhīm settled with his son Ismā'īl (ﷺ). It is where they together constructed the first sanctuary dedicated to the purpose of striving for Allah (ﷻ) and committing to His counsel. The covenant would pass through the righteous descendants of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ); offenders would be excluded even if they hailed from the bloodline of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). When the Israelis developed an offending nationalism and tribalism, they excluded themselves from the covenant. Their religious theories centered around Jerusalem. Their offense was to claim that Jerusalem is exclusively theirs. They peddled this propaganda during the Prophet's (ﷺ) time and they are spreading it through the world today. For this offense they have forfeited their historical role. The

Muslims assumed the mantle of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ); to this day, despite all the nationalistic deviations in the Ummah, the Muslims remain the rightful custodians of a universal and inclusive Jerusalem because they have inherited the Abrahamic universal construct of Makkah. Even though Makkah is temporarily under the control of a family — the Saudis who have more in common with nationalistic Israeli scriptural exclusivism than with Islamic inclusivism — the Qur’anic imperative makes it clear that any generation who picks up the Islamic banner inherits the inclusivist character of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ).

When the Muslims turned toward al-Quds for almost one and-a-half years, it was not without purpose. It demonstrated the Yahūdī and Christian discomfort with the Muslims “sharing” Jerusalem. This was at a time when Muslims were a fledgling “minority” in the Arabian peninsula. Is it likely that Yahūdī and Christian “tolerance” is such that they would be willing to share Jerusalem now, when most of the people of Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and surrounding areas are Muslims? Their dislike of Muslims is so entrenched that they do not even consider Ismā‘īl, the elder son of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), a part of prophetic history. This historical lesson demonstrates that class-conscious and bigoted Jews and Christians, identified in today’s world as Zionists and imperialists, are not willing to coexist with Muslims who live up to the classless, antiracial, and antinational standard of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). Just as they are unwilling to recognize the Makkah of Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ), they are averse to accepting that their scripture was reinstated without deviations or concessions by the final prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ).

At that time, this crisis in human scriptural relations was brought on by Yahūdī and Christian, self-centered interpretation of the Bible (or what passed for the Bible), along with what may be characterized as either religious racism or attempted religious imperialism over the issue of Jerusalem. It was in this polarizing environment that the Muslims were offered the comfort of an all-embracing Abrahamic Makkah. Thus is Makkah the refuge from nationalism, religious bigotry, and scriptural arrogance. Unfortunately nowadays, the one-humanity character of Makkah itself, which took so much sacrifice to establish, has also been eclipsed by a nationalism, reli-

gious bigotry, and scriptural arrogance — this time represented not by the Yahūd, but by the clan of Saud.

Makkah was meant to be the prototype of Islamic autonomy and independence from Yahūdī racism and Christian imperialism. Makkah signifies a distinctive and distinguished Islamic doctrine. It means an independent conformity and *qiblah*. But what does Makkah mean to the Muslims in our time? In the best of public discourses Makkah is meaningless; Muslims have an empty *qiblah*. This Qur’anic lesson liberates Muslims from any fixation with the power and elite structures of those who profess to be Jews and Christians. But we have contemporary “Muslims” who want to validate their Islam by recognition from those who call themselves Jews and Christians. The Muslims of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) making did not have technology and the latest inventions patented to their credit. They were unsightly figures from the standpoint of modern “etiquette.” But they had their priorities right. They had no sense of inferiority that looked for legitimacy through the approval of the Jews or Christians. Nor were they apologetic, always contriving new arguments to acquire Jewish approval and satisfaction. And nor were they inclined to horse-trade in political capital to gain the recognition by this power bloc or another. Ponder, in contrast, today’s frantic Islamists, busy hammering together political action committees (PACs) and lobbies to influence decision makers in their Washington and European “*qiblahs*.”

Obviously we have a long way to go. Makkah in the context of the *āyāt* here is a self-confident, self-assured, and self-willed Makkah. But Makkah in the context of the Saudi administration is a junior, petty, and subordinate borough. Saudi officials who are responsible for the administration of this *qiblah* are repeatedly guilty of discrimination against Muslims while they idolize Americans and Europeans. The restoration of Makkah to its proper status demands the action of strong and independent Muslims, committed to Makkah as a true *qiblah*.

The shrinking world in which we all live is more and more humanly psychosomatic and phobic. People are confused because they have no anchor psychologically, socially, individually, and

jointly. They are also directionless, therefore they become aimless and hopeless. But this confused world population of over six billion has a clandestine “*qiblah*.” More and more decision makers⁶ — at least those of them who shape the way people think about their world — are financially and economically, if not religiously and racially, allied to the Yahūd who occupy Jerusalem and are trying to turn it into the world’s seat of power on the basis of Zionism.

Makkah has lacked its luster for many generations and centuries now. It may come as a shock to the traditionalists and the orthodox, ritualistic Muslims, but Makkah is, for all practical purposes, no longer the *qiblah*, even though all Muslims ritualistically face it when they offer their prayers. Just as *ṣalāh* has been reduced to tedious prayers, so the *qiblah* has been reduced to an autonomic reflex when it comes to the direction of prayer. We have a world, suffering crises of faith and reason, that is experimenting, out of practical vacuity, with *natural theology*, *liberation theology*, and *theosophy*.⁷ Most of this is coming from the very same parties who have their eyes set on confiscating Jerusalem for their own “legitimacy.” While these mindless spirits and spiritless minds try their military and political best to wrest Jerusalem forever from Islam and the Muslims, there are the self-styled “custodians” of the Ḥaramayn, the rulers of Makkah and Madinah, who are sweating to enter into this league of Western confusion and illegitimacy. In the process, Makkah has been left behind as a *qiblah*: a spiritual anchor, an ideological watchtower, and a seat of power that stands for Islamic self-respect, self-direction, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. It should surprise no one that after Makkah ceased to be the Muslims’ *qiblah* in the proper sense of the word, Muslims today are scattered into more than 50 nation-states. The innocent pride that once extended to the *qiblah* from a Muslim anywhere in the world as he offered his *ṣalāh* is so long gone that no Muslim today really knows what it means to have a *qiblah*.

Makkah, the *qiblah*, from behind centuries of neglect, and from beneath the ideological debris that has clogged the channels of normal and natural human behavior, is calling out to all Muslims, “Regain the independence that Allah (ﷻ) has endowed

you with and distinguish yourselves in the *dīn* that Allah (ﷻ) has entrusted you with.” Those who tried to monopolize Jerusalem then and who are trying to monopolize it now are sinking deeper and deeper into “new-age” fads, the occult, and meditative escapism. The more they force their self-importance and ego on Jerusalem, the more they fall apart at the heart. Muslims, now more than ever, have to live up to a responsibility that will not only save them but also countless others from a world whose priests and rabbis have long been cut off from the political order, and who have become subservient to the secular, humanist politicians of the day.

When Makkah resumes its *qiblah* status, it will dwarf Washington, London, and Paris on the one hand, and the Vatican, Tibetan Buddhism, and Celtic Christianity on the other. Makkah in the discourse of these *āyāt* stands for the autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom of Muslims from all other social and religious orders, especially the Judeo-Christian “civilization” that is in the habit of monopolizing religion and racializing God. The Saudis have managed to keep Makkah a *non-qiblah*, thereby blurring the distinctive features of an independent Islamic Ummah.

Makkah at a turning point in history 1,400 years ago, was purged of Arabian culture; but Makkah currently is inundated with all and sundry cultures, including the Arabian one. Islamic culture no longer resides in Makkah. Worldwide *kufri*, working through its Saudi agents, has transferred Makkah back to its days of *jāhiliyah*. Makkah, the *qiblah*, is meant to be the high and open Abrahamic seat of divine authority, the focus of all the free Muslims of the world, not only in the ritualistic, but in the fullest and truest meaning of the word *qiblah*.

The Self-Important Yahūdī Penchant for Argumentation

From among people, the fools will say, “What has turned them away from their *qiblah* which they have hitherto observed?” Say, “Allah’s is the east and the west; He guides whom He wills to a straight way.”

And thus have We willed you to be an equitable Ummah, so that [with your life experiences] you become attestants to other peoples, and the Apostle becomes a witness over you. And We have not rendered a previous *qiblah* for you [O Prophet] except to distinguish those who follow the Apostle from those who are inclined to retreat [into tradition]. This was a hard test indeed, except for those whom Allah has guided; for Allah does not disregard your *imān*. Surely Allah is most compassionate toward man, very beneficent (2:143).

Given the Qur'anic context of these *āyāt*, and given the historical context in which they were revealed in Madinah, it becomes quite obvious that the word *fools* (*sufahā'*) in the *āyah* above refers to the Yahūd. It was the Yahūd who instigated a campaign against the switching of the *qiblah* from Masjid al-Aqṣá in Jerusalem to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makkah. It was the Yahūd, ever the experts in dubious questions, who posed the following query, **“What made them [the Muslims] give up the *qiblah* they fostered?”**

Al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib reported that on his arrival in Madinah, the Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) was accommodated by his forefathers who had become his supporters, meaning the Anṣār.⁸ The Apostle (ﷺ) directed his *ṣalāh* toward Bayt al-Maqdis (the Holy House in Jerusalem) for 16 or 17 months even though he felt affection for having the Inviolable Home (in Makkah) as the *qiblah*.

The first *ṣalāh* he was instructed to perform toward Makkah was an 'Aṣr *ṣalāh*. The local Muslims joined him in that *ṣalāh*. One of them left the congregation and passed by people in another *masjid* as they were in *rukū'*. He said to them, “I bear witness to Allah that I performed my *ṣalāh* with Allah's Apostle toward the Ka'bah.” And they all turned toward the Inviolable House in Makkah.⁹ Yahūd were quite satisfied to have the Prophet (ﷺ) orient his *ṣalāh* toward the Holy Precinct in Jerusalem. But when he changed over toward the Ka'bah of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) in Makkah, they immediately disputed the change with him. It was at this point that

the *āyah* was declared, **“We notice [O Prophet] how often you turn your face toward heaven for guidance...”** to which the fools and foolhardy said, **“What diverted them [the Muslims] from the *qiblah* they had?”**¹⁰

This Yahūdī question may now seem distant to us. It may also appear irrelevant or curious. But the fact is that the Yahūd were an integral part of Madinah’s social and economic structure; they were speaking not as outsiders or foreigners, but as natives and citizens. This is why their challenging and derogatory words had a damaging impact on the Muslims of Madinah. These Yahūdī words were serious enough to potentially ignite a *fitnah* (sedition or civil disobedience). The Qur’anic language indicates the overarching potential of this Yahūdī instigation within the Muslim mind, as well as its corroding effect on the collective allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ).

With hindsight, it could be said that the inclusive Islamic approach to Makkah and al-Quds had psychologically cornered the Yahūd into blurting out their impertinent question. Their ability to pose damaging questions — ones that incorporate a perverse logic framed by ulterior motives — required a stiff rebuke and corrective action from Allah (ﷻ). The guiding words of the Qur’an immediately alleviated the likely consequences of this Yahūdī innuendo. The Qur’an instructs the Prophet (ﷺ), and thereby all Muslims of conscience, on how to respond to Yahūdī trouble-making. It restates and confirms the core truth. And in the process it sets the conceptual record straight, **“Say, “To Allah belong the east and the west; He guides whom He wills to a straight course” (2:142).**

This clarifies the issue about which Yahūd made their fuss: God can accept prayers toward Jerusalem just as easily as He can accept them toward Makkah. Implied by this Yahūdī polarization of Makkah and Jerusalem is an exclusive God who belongs either to Makkah or to Jerusalem. The *āyah* diffuses this either-or concept of God and asserts that Allah (ﷻ) is not a geographical deity. He can be approached and found in any direction, from anywhere. Geographical locations are not intrinsically superior because of their physical placement. What makes a particular area special or unique is Allah’s (ﷻ) decree. With these facts at work Allah (ﷻ)

directs whomever He wants to an accurate course; if He chooses for His subjects a particular *qiblah*, then all is said and done. So why stir a commotion about Allah's (ﷻ) choice?

But Yahūd have always had a knack for interfering in other peoples' affairs and making a mockery of Allah's (ﷻ) mode of education. Take for example our present world affairs. There are more than enough developments in the Islamic hemisphere; why is it that Yahūd are the self-appointed spokesmen and commentators on what is happening in the Muslim world? The nature of Yahūd in Madinah 1,400 years ago and the nature of Yahūd today are the same. Yahūd are Yahūd.

The Central Ummah

Then the *āyāt* of the Qur'an speak to the committed Muslims about their reason for being. Such questions as "Why am I here?" and "What is life all about?" and "What is the purpose of living?" come to the minds of empty-hearted people who no longer have strength or motivation in their individual or collective character. But those who are Muslims, and realize they are committed Muslims, are here offered an answer. They know from reading and understanding the Qur'an that they are on a mission, which has to be communicated and addressed to the rest of humanity who, for one reason or another, are directionless and disoriented. The God-given answer to a wondering soul is found in its identification with other like-minded and like-hearted people. That is why this purposeful assembly of people, the Ummah, needs a *qiblah* that belongs to it and not to circuitous, oblique, roundabout, or diversionary blocs of people, as is the case with those who are not favored to have a divine word to guide them. This gives the Muslim Ummah its unique personality as well as its unparalleled status among the rest of the nations of the world. All other peoples have either abandoned God or severed any meaningful relationship with Him. That is why they end up asking themselves, "Who are we, anyway, and what do we stand for after all?" No such question comes from Muslims who listen to Allah's (ﷻ) words of wisdom and guidance, **"It is thus that We have**

made you [the committed Muslims] an Ummah of access; so that you may be witnesses over [other] peoples while the Apostle becomes the witness over you” (2:143).

Therefore, by virtue of this *āyah*, the Muslim Ummah is an *ummaḥ* of approachability. *Ummatan wasatā* could also mean the central Ummah, as opposed to the marginal and peripheral Muslims who live at the edges of today’s social and ideological realities. A central *ummaḥ* cannot be ignored, because it is by definition preoccupied with the relevant issues of dispensing justice and equity. A central *ummaḥ*, as the Muslims are supposed to be, is an *ummaḥ* that sets the ideological and moral standards of the times. It is an *ummaḥ* that everyone listens to when it speaks. This central (*wasatā*) body politic defines what is right and what is wrong; it sets the mark by which all other peoples of the world are measured. But today we Muslims must face the facts. There is no central *ummaḥ* that calls the shots. More to the point, the Muslims themselves have become the recipients of ideologies, concepts and policies that are, to put it politely, diametrically opposed to their mind, manners and mission in life. The definition of a central *ummaḥ* places it in a position to dispense justice and promote equity. The *āyah* says that, as this Ummah is central to the rest of humanity, so Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) himself is central to this Ummah. He is the one who set the standards of equity and equality, justice and arbitration. As the Apostle (ﷺ) was able to set a community of people on a course of rightfulness and lawfulness in the form of the nascent Islamic state in Arabia, so it is expected that this Ummah should be able to orient humanity on a course of collective right-mindedness and public adjudication.

Is it a coincidence that there seems to be a direct connection between the status and centrality of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the status and centrality of the Ummah? The more central the Prophet (ﷺ) is to the Ummah, the more central the Ummah is to humanity; and the more “marginalized” the Prophet (ﷺ) is within the Ummah, the more marginalized the Ummah is within humanity. When the Prophet’s (ﷺ) example is the defining standard of action in the Ummah, when his Sunnah and Sirah are the molding forces of this

Ummah, then — and only then — will this Ummah have a leading role in the community of nations and world affairs. Without the Prophet's (ﷺ) leadership, this is a drifting nation; and without the Ummah's supervision it is a drifting humanity.

An *ummaḥ* is central when it sets the standards. An *ummaḥ* is central when it is not forced to react to extremes and wobble between superpowers. An *ummaḥ* is central when it does not slide to the left or to the right on the political spectrum. And an *ummaḥ* is central when it is near the center of events and developments. It is central when it is accessible to peoples of the north and the south, the Orient and the Occident; it is central when it influences and controls events instead of being influenced and controlled by them.

A central *ummaḥ* is not lost in a crass materialistic world that feeds the basest appetites and lusts of man; and a central *ummaḥ* is not submerged in a detached spiritualism that numbs the body into inactivity, idleness and stagnation. A central *ummaḥ* gives priority to a spirit that needs its physical manifestation and a body that needs its spiritual expression. A central *ummaḥ* is a people that consolidates its affairs around an all-important cause without being diverted into the peripheries of marginal concerns and distracting issues. A central *ummaḥ* can identify its priorities and pursue them with a uniform purpose of being, not allowing itself to be scattered, divided, and dismembered around the globe, unable to strategize, prioritize or execute any collective action. This is the case with Muslims today under the imposed nation-state “order,” which has drawn away from every conceivable binding issue that rank and file Muslims share. Imprisoned in the nation-state structure, Muslims are at a loss to deal with the staggering problems of dislocations and occupations (Palestine, Bosnia, Kashmir, Kosovo, etc.); they cannot find their way out of economic policies that have rendered their non-renewable resources, petroleum in particular, cheaper than water; and they are lost in the face of the savage policies of massacres and genocide that have become the normal practices of the forces of *kufṛ* everywhere.

Allah (ﷻ) also wants us to be central to our own selves. *Ummatan wasatā* means we neither neglect legality, which is the

socialization and institutionalization of morality, nor do we slight morality because it is the individualization of legality. We do not go to the *Christian* extreme of dismissing the legal necessity of social life because of a total emphasis on the spirit of the word, in the process killing the spirit of the *kingdom*. We also do not go to the *Jewish* extreme of overlooking the spirit of the scriptures and in the process evolving laws without love. We, as an *ummatan wasatā*, know that morality needs a legal system to help it expand and we also know that legality needs a moral standard of divine origin to help it contract. Therefore, with an Islamic *ummatan wasatā*, we spare ourselves the never-ending Western argument about separating church from state, and about how big the government should be or how small the church should be. Man cannot be convinced by the coercion of state nor can he be left totally to his own sense of right and wrong.

The individual consciences of the people in a community have to grow into a joint social authority; and political authority has to remain bounded by moral convictions and moral reckoning that are anchored in the understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Within this atmosphere of a friendly moral authority and a thoughtful legitimate faithfulness the committed Muslims do not suffer from an individualism without limits or restraints, as is the case in Western liberal and democratic societies; nor do Muslims have totalitarian and authoritarian governments without restraints, as is the case with Western dictatorial and despotic regimes. In an Islamic setting the government is moral in that it cares for individuals; and the individuals are responsible in that they honor the government. Governments cannot be damaged by libertine individual "freedoms;" likewise, individuals cannot be harmed by excessive government "controls." On this basis, the relationship between citizen and state, or individual and society, becomes equitable, congenial, agreeable and moral.

This is the Islamic central Ummah, in the sense that it stands between time periods in humanity's history when men were illogical and irrational, such as Europe during its Dark Ages, and a humanity that almost deifies the "mind," such as this post-Enlightenment rationalist era, in which contemporary Europe and the West have

elevated “science” to divine status. The Islamic Ummah is central in another sense. It is at once accessible to the victims of nonliterate societies that are under the spell of superstition and forms of fetishism as in some regions of Africa, Latin America, and Asia; and to victims of the self-styled “enlightened” societies that are stupefied by dazzling and seductive scientific technology in Europe and North America, where mechanized humans are stripped of the closeness that makes them congenial beings. This Ummah is central because it holds a symbiotic balance between feelings and thoughts, between emotions and mind, and between affection and logic. In this privileged position there is no contradiction between warm-heartedness and reason, or between how the heart cares and how the head thinks. Furthermore, there is no conflict between God and man, between divine revelation and human reflection, or between a heavenly scripture and its social action.

The reason why humanity no longer has this *central Ummah* is that the Muslims do not have a social order of their own free making. Nowhere in the world are committed Muslims permitted to enact their own “social contract.” The only exception is the Islamic Republic of Iran and the arguable exception is Sudan.¹¹ Even these two areas, with all the nationalism and other peculiarisms inherent in their respective populations, are finding it difficult to redefine their policies and politics to meet the Islamic standard. Only with this standard can they reposition their governments and social institutions, along with their communities and societies, in a central position of accessibility, proximity, and responsibility. Although there is a worldwide revival of the Islamic conscience and destiny — especially evident in places such as Lebanon, Algeria, Chechnya, Turkey, Malaysia, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Palestine — by and large, the social fabric of the Muslims in the world is void of Allah’s (ﷻ) standards at all levels from perceptions to principles, from love to laws, and from word to deed. Therefore — and let us admit the truth so that we may begin to address the problem — the Muslims of today are on the fringe and not at the center; they form a point of divergence rather than of convergence, and they are a distraction from Allah’s (ﷻ) world order rather than an attraction to it.

It should surprise no one that tribal-cum-nationalist kings and presidents in the Afro-Asian Islamic heartland, along with their hirelings, are the obstacles to an *ummatah wasatā*. The Muslim people have to wake up and throw these usurpers out of their way.

Mankind depends on it: these enemies of the scriptural order are choking the flow of history. Problems are getting worse everywhere and there is simply no more time to wait for the hard core enemies of Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) to come to their senses. We, for the sake of hundreds of millions of innocent human beings who are being crushed under the weight of the Yahūdī and imperialist industrial complex, and its military offshoots, are duty-bound to come to their help. Even while many of them have the wrong impression about us, we are the only human beings left who still have the moral capacity and the ideological fortitude to arrest the cruel forces arrayed against them.

Cleansing the *Qiblah* from Racial and Cultural Ownership

Our political understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah has to be revived. Without it, we will not be able to recognize the likes of a Saudi king and an Egyptian president, along with the rest of the political elites in Muslim lands, as constituting the lowest rung of the *kāfir* establishment, and not the highest offices of the Muslim political order. It is within the context of an Islamic social role model for the rest of humanity that Allah (ﷻ) discloses the fact about the *qiblah* and the Muslims' redirection toward it,

And it is only that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who back out [of their original commitment] that We appointed [for this society] the *qiblah* which you [O Prophet] had formerly observed (2:143).

This is one of the most profound lessons in defining and building the Ummah. Sometimes Muslims are heard asking, "Who are we?" Does race, ethnic origin, language, color, school of thought or

nationality figure into our definition as Muslims? Is culture — any culture — in any way descriptive of Islam? Does *my* history have any impact on who I am as a Muslim? This *āyah* answers these questions as well as other similar questions.

To understand this lesson thoroughly we have to realize that prior to Muhammad's (ﷺ) divine mission, the Arabians had taken Makkah as their first city, their seat of power, their capital, as it were. Makkah in the 6th century CE was, in the Arabian mind, the hub of Arabian culture and cultural activities. Makkah had, in that Arabian mind set, lost its Abrahamic luster. To the Arabians of those times, Makkah had no ideological significance. The Arabians' ideological attachment to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) had long since vanished; their relationship to Makkah had become a purely cultural one. The Inviolable House (al-Bayt al-Ḥarām) in Makkah had thus become a "religious" retreat and symbol, rather than an ideological one. So the concept of *qiblah* was smothered by an Arabian culture, and Makkah was reduced to a national (tribal at that time) city. But Makkah was meant to be ideological, not cultural. Makkah is inviting and not excluding. Makkah, the *qiblah*, is universal and not insular.

It was because Makkah had become Arabized that Allah (ﷻ) instructed the Prophet (ﷺ) and the early Muslims to redirect their focus from Makkah to another place for a time. This elsewhere, chosen by Allah (ﷻ), was the Holy Sanctuary in al-Quds. By detaching these cultural Arabians from their heritage to Makkah, with all the sentimentality that went with it, Allah (ﷻ) was removing the cultural and exclusionary tendencies that were associated with "Arabians and Makkah." This was also a litmus test for the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ). The Arabians would have to choose between clinging to their culture and obeying the Prophet (ﷺ). They would have to choose between their Arabian heritage, despite its historical Abrahamic origins, and a new Islamic order; they could not belong to both at the same time. They would have to prove their loyalty to the Prophet (ﷺ) — a leader by virtue of revelation, scripture, and Allah's (ﷻ) commission. Or they would have to look for another leader, whose qualifications would be in

terms of their culture: a “national” hero, and “one of their own.” The key point, which was also an appraisal of these early adherents to the leadership of Muhammad (ﷺ), was that Makkah and Muhammad (ﷺ) were no longer cultural or ethnic symbols.

This may seem like a fine point. In fact it is one of those subtle snares that interfere with the strictly ideological orientation of being a committed and determined Muslim. This Islamic commitment to Allah (ﷻ) tolerates no implications of cultural or communal preferences. Such preferences, should they contaminate the Islamic struggle, will rebound with devastating results capable of subverting the Islamic standards of justice and equality. To redirect the collective ego of the Arabians, Allah (ﷻ), in His infinite wisdom, weaned these dynastic humans away from their cultural ego by relocating the *qiblah* to al-Quds instead of Makkah. And thus does He say, **“We but designated the *qiblah* that you complied with only to verify those who follow the Apostle from those who fall back [into parochialism]...”**

It takes issues of this magnitude to filter out the cultural “Muslim” from the committed Muslim, the ethnocentric “Muslim” from the universal Muslim, and the “Muslim” of convenience from the earnestly devoted Muslim. This is, of course, easier said than done. It is not easy for an individual to shed his national or ethnic character and acquire a cosmopolitan Islamic character. Individuals and societies have a strong feeling of *self*. In the case of the Arabians at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), Allah (ﷻ) saw to it that this Islamic responsibility does not fall within the national or nationalistic tendencies of this first generation of Muslims. This is equally true of any and all people who find themselves in the front-line positions of the Islamic movement. Hence Allah’s (ﷻ) understanding words are directed toward those who still harbor remnants of nationalist tendencies, recognizing that removing them is not easy for acculturated individuals, **“...even if it [the purge] is so difficult except for those who are guided by Allah” (2:143).**

There is a *technical* nature in some human beings that assigns an unusually high weight to the *mechanical* performance of man while tending to overlook or dismiss the motivational content of

man's performance. These types of humans, and they were Muslims in this case, had to be reassured by Allah (ﷻ) that their times of devotion and communion with Allah (ﷻ) — their *ṣalāh* — toward al-Quds were not in vain. They were not being misled when they were ordered to turn their direction of *ṣalāh* from Makkah to al-Quds; and they are not being misled again when they had to change back from al-Quds to Makkah. Allah (ﷻ) is not a mechanical God; He is not a *technical* God, and He is not a literal or mathematical God. For wholehearted and devout Muslims who faithfully obeyed and oriented their minds and souls to Him, a physical or material direction could not impede the flow of honesty and dedication from a human's heart to his Maker and Superior. Allah (ﷻ) will not hold human beings accountable for their sincere efforts in growing up, for their unintentional mistakes in seeking Him, or for their earnest endeavors to collectively grow out of habituated traditions and an imposed status quo. Their conviction will eventually deliver them, **“But Allah will surely not lose sight of your trust [in Him] — for, behold, Allah is Most Compassionate toward man, a Dispenser of grace” (2:143).**

Allah (ﷻ) knows how culturally “wired” we are. He knows very well how our instincts work to take sides with our own, even when they are demonstrably doing wrong. But if there is a genuine exertion by us fragile humans against these innate tendencies, then Allah (ﷻ) will see us through no matter what the temptations are, no matter how long it takes, and no matter whether or not there will be a worldly triumph. The human intention and the human aim have to be centered on Allah (ﷻ) with no fallback positions on culture, nationalism, race, or class. The more obstacles there are on the way to this *de-culturalized* Islam and the more distractions there are away from this denationalized Islam, the more Allah (ﷻ) wants us to appreciate His wisdom in showing us how to conquer our cultural ego, our racial ego, our national ego, and our ethnic ego, **“Certainly, Allah is sympathetic and merciful to people.”**

Some of us tend to overlook the cultural component of our Islamic character, conveniently justifying our “culture” as part of our Islamic orientation. But to be a founding Muslim, you have to

remove all cultural residues. That is what the Qur’anic words were doing to the Arabs of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions and contemporaries. To borrow a Western mind’s observation of this decisive cultural persona,

Some cultural values appear to be incorporated into the individual’s super-ego — to become part of the individual’s deepest sense of what is right. Some cultural symbols appear to have unconscious meaning and under certain conditions apparently become an important part of an individual’s identity. And some... cultural schemata appear to be internalized by most individuals and to function as general goal systems or motives.¹²

After an individual or a society of individuals breaks away from its cultural habits, customs, and traditions, even if this culture is traceable to Abraham (ﷺ) as was the case with the Arabian culture of the Madinan and Makkan nomads, human nature at this particular and delicate time needs Allah’s (ﷻ) guardianship and care. Allah’s (ﷻ) reassuring words are there for those who have gone so far in their desire to please Him, **“Verily, Allah is gracious and merciful to people”** — people who have shed their cultural “roots,” their inherited mores, and their folk ways. These metamorphosing people are not in a social vacuum; they have Allah (ﷻ) to coach and condition them, and Allah (ﷻ) to cultivate and civilize them.

At this delicate moment, humans feel they belong to Allah (ﷻ) only; they no longer belong to a history, a race, a class, or a geography that inclines them toward nationalist or racist sentiments. At such a delicate moment Allah (ﷻ) turned to His dear Prophet (ﷺ) and responded to him in the matter of the *qiblah*. With this fresh start the committed Muslims now had a new *qiblah* cleansed of all vestiges of tribalism, ethnicism, nationalism, and racism.

Along with all this are divine words of caution against the conspiracies and contrivances of the Yahūd. The Qur’an takes us into the psychology of the Yahūd, from which spring their cam-

paigns and crusades. Allah (ﷻ), in His glory, took good care of this nascent Islamic nucleus; He sought to foster and nurture this infant reality in Madinah, and the words of the Qur'an swell with His love for those who conform unto Him in the core of their hearts. But the Yahūd have never given up trying to undermine and deflect the committed Muslims, the inheritors of the Covenant and the Trust from Allah (ﷻ), the Glorious, the Majestic.

We have seen you [O Prophet] turn your face toward the sky [for guidance]; and now We shall indeed have you turn to a *qiblah* which will fulfill your hope. Turn, then, your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it [in *ṣalāh*]. And, verily, those who have received earlier scriptures know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer; and Allah is not oblivious of what they do. And yet, even if you were to place all evidence before those who received earlier scriptures, they would not adopt your *qiblah*; and neither are you to latch onto their *qiblah*, nor even are they abiding by each others' *qiblah*. And if you [O Muhammad] should follow their erring views after all the knowledge that has come unto you, you would surely be among the offenders.

People of earlier scriptures know it [scripture] as they know their own children; but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the truth — the truth from your Sustainer. Be not, then, among the vacillators for every person has a direction of his own to which he turns. Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, Allah will gather you all unto Himself; for, verily, Allah overpowers everything.

Thus, from wherever you may move forward, turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām for, behold, this [commandment] comes in truth from your Sustainer; and Allah is not unenlightened of what you do.

Hence, from wherever you may come forth, turn your face [in devout orientation] toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it, so that people should have no [valid] argument against you unless they are bent on unfairness. And hold not them in awe, but stand in awe of Me, [and obey Me,] so that I may bestow upon you the full measure of My blessings, and that you might be guided (2:144–150).

At the beginning of this new set of heaven-to-human instructions (*āyah* 144), we are presented with a moving and revealing glimpse of one of the moments in the life of the wise Prophet (ﷺ) in which he was directly assisted by Allah (ﷻ). His condition is captured by these Qur’anic words, “**We have seen you [O Prophet] often turn your face toward the sky [seeking guidance]...**” This is indicative of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) desire to be relieved of the pressure being placed on the small community of Muslims because of the issue of a *qiblah* other than Jerusalem. This could also mean that the Prophet (ﷺ) was under psychological pressure from the makers and molders of public opinion who were casting aspersions, throwing accusations, and raising doubts in the public mind.

The fuel for this campaign of defamation against Islam and the Muslims lay in the argumentations and disputations cranked up by the Yahūd. Yahūd should have known better; when the Muslims adopted al-Quds as the *qiblah*, these Yahūd should have shown understanding, sharing, or even fraternity with Muslim scripturalists who were now consolidating the Abrahamic tradition, if not inheriting it. But the selfishness and racism of the Yahūd could not tolerate others claiming a religious connection to Jerusalem, especially when these “others” — goyim, gentiles — were themselves receiving authentic and genuine revelation from on high. Yahūd churned their subliminal feelings into a propaganda campaign to detract and deflect, to misinform and mislead, to shake up and stir up, and then to distort and divert public opinion concerning the orientation of Muslims toward al-Quds during *ṣalāh*.

It may have been that the Yahūdī mind anticipated what would happen if the Muslims finally and conclusively adopted al-Quds as their definite and final *qiblah*. Al-Quds would then have become the focus of their faith and identity, and ultimately the center for the Muslims' pilgrimage, the Hajj.

In any case, it was in this context that the Prophet (ﷺ) was raising his face to Allah (ﷻ), seeking a release from the attacks of the Yahūd. We know of no *du'ā'* the Prophet (ﷺ) said on this occasion, but we know that the possibility of prayer toward the Ka'bah in Makkah had been established. Did the Prophet (ﷺ) specifically desire and pray for a change in the *qiblah*? Or did he seek merely some milder relief from the pressures on the Muslims, while accepting without thought Allah's (ﷻ) command to have al-Quds as the *qiblah*, despite all the annoyances that came with it? These questions are impossible to answer conclusively. However, a legitimate inquiry could possibly be posed here: have the Yahūd managed throughout the centuries to delete any such *du'ā'*, even from the Islamic historical record, just as they are trying nowadays in conjunction with the Islamic "scholars for dollars" to delete references to treacherous Jewish history from textbooks and history books, in libraries and bookstores, and at the level of publishers and distributors?

Whatever the case, Allah (ﷻ) responded to the Prophet's (ﷺ) Yahūdī-instigated ordeal in a way that typifies His affectionate, kind, and caring relationship with His Prophet (ﷺ), **"...and now We shall indeed have you turn to a *qiblah* which will fulfill your hope."** Then He specified the *qiblah* that He knew would comfort His final Apostle (ﷺ), **"Turn, then, your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām."** This is the Prophet's (ﷺ) *qiblah* and it is the *qiblah* of his Ummah: those who were with him and those who are to follow in all generations to come until Allah (ﷻ) inherits the earth and its inhabitants, **"...and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it [in *ṣalāh*]."**

The *qiblah* is designated by Allah (ﷻ) in these *āyāt* to be the central point of reference of Muslims the world over: one Ummah having one *qiblah*. The *qiblah* — a unifying and a united *qiblah* — is

the hub of the Ummah regardless of semblances, speeches, or skin; It is the pivot of the hearts and minds of Muslims around the world, from continent to continent and from pole to pole; it is the throbbing heart of the Ummah. The countries and capitals, the clouds and climes, the clans and kindred, the customs and costumes of all and sundry in the Ummah are — or should be — an extension of this *qiblah*. At the core of Muslims' collective Islamic identity and being is the *qiblah* in Makkah.

In our daily *ṣalāḥs* we ask Allah (ﷻ) to lead us on *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* but this “straight course” needs a direction and an aim. The *qiblah* is that direction and that aim. It is not enough to have a physical *qiblah*; and it is not enough to know whether Makkah is to the east or west of our location. In addition to that we must settle on al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makkah as our seat of unity and power, our goal of integration and assimilation, and our end-result of non-negotiable conformity to Allah (ﷻ), the sole Superior and the only Omnipotent. Allah (ﷻ) is One, whose scriptures' contents are one, whose Prophets' (ﷺ) missions are one, and whose *qiblah* is the divinely-nominated nucleus of this Oneness (*tawḥīd*).

Allah (ﷻ) has shown this Ummah every reason for a unity of purpose: He, His scriptures, His Prophets (ﷺ), and His *qiblah*. Each is one and each leads us to think and act in accordance with His unity and the unity of our own purpose. Why then do we behave so divisively? So what if we have different countries of origin? So what if we have different colors, different languages and different tribes? How do these incidental features take priority over the concept of *tawḥīd* that is the essence of our existence?

They do so when the very concept of *qiblah* is eliminated from our lives; when al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is nothing but another *masjid*, a structure with floors, walls and ceilings; when Allah (ﷻ) is just another “god” with His attributes and worshippers; when Muhammad (ﷺ) is just another prophet, reduced in certain circles of ‘ilm (knowledge) to a mailman who delivered the Qur’an to the Arabs; when Makkah is just another city with buildings, streets and alleys; and when Islam is just another religion with rituals, prayers, and pilgrimage. Then we have the pitiful state of affairs we are in

today: Muslims without a *qiblah*, or Muslims with only a material, worldly *qiblah*.

How did the people of other scriptures get involved in the internal affair of the Muslims' new *qiblah*? **“Those who have received earlier scriptures know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer...”** As Allah (ﷻ) says, these people, who say they belong to previous scriptures, holy books revealed before the advent of Muhammad (ﷺ), do know that al-Masjid al-Harām in Makkah is God's first sanctuary, founded by Abraham (ﷺ).

Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) is the spiritual father of all the Muslims who accept this divine responsibility on earth. These people who say they adhere to early scriptures know that God's order to the Prophet (ﷺ) is genuine and authentic; they know without doubt that it comes from God. They know — but they behave contrary to what they know. This is an issue that today's Muslims must understand; Jews and Christians, as they call themselves, will not follow common sense and abundant reason when it comes to the Muslims' relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

They demonstrated this on the matter of the *qiblah*. The Qur'an exposes the internal thoughts that contradict their outward behavior. One would wonder, if they know this to be the truth, then why do they not accept it? The mental and psychological obstacle the Muslims have to surmount is that these so-called Jews and Christians are averse to Islam not only because of their ignorance of it, which is the case here and there, but also because of their real knowledge of it. So Muslims need not worry about what Jews and Christians think of them. It is not these scripture pretenders who count; it is Allah (ﷻ) who counts, **“And Allah is not oblivious of what they do” (2: 144).**

We hope that the day will soon come when Muslims are more concerned with Allah's (ﷻ) approval than with Jewish or Christian approval. The fact that still has not sunk into the Muslims' consciousness is that these Bible affiliates do not need proof and evidence to see “the light;” what they need and are lacking is sincerity, humility, and a selfless interest in God. It is these

things that would enable them to identify with the truth once they see it, **“And yet, even if you were to place all evidence before those who received earlier scriptures they would not adopt your qiblah...”** (2:145).

They are stubborn; and their stubbornness is subservient to their whims. They are motivated only by their short-term “self-interest,” which makes them biased and prejudiced. Many naive Muslims think that Jews and Christians have not become Muslims because they do not know what Islam is, or because Islam was not properly and convincingly presented to them. Muslims who think this way are deluding themselves and misleading other Muslims, often with the support of petrodollars. The *āyah* **“And yet, even if you were to place all evidence before those who received earlier scriptures they would not adopt your qiblah...”** tells every attentive Muslim that most Jews and Christians will never adopt the Islamic *qiblah*. Of course, there are individual Christians and Jews who become Muslim and adopt the Islamic *qiblah*. But let us not confuse trees with the forest; that a few individuals who previously followed the doctored Bible become Muslims does not mean that all Christians and all Jews are going to accept Islam en masse through efforts to present them with the truth.

The unpleasant reality, which Muslims have still not had the courage to face, is that the Judeo-Christian worldly and material “interest” can never permit its adherents to acknowledge a selfless, independent and just *qiblah*, as represented by al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. They know what the Islamic *qiblah* stands for, but they choose to protect and embellish their common “national interest,” their money-making operations, their transnational corporations, and their oppressive and exploitative institutions, rather than go over to an Islamic *qiblah* with worldwide ramifications of human equality, social justice, and genuinely *universal* rights.

It is to protect this Judeo-Christian priority that they have built an international alliance against any rehabilitation of the concept of *qiblah* by the global Islamic movement. Their hostility to the Islamic movement is in proportion to their obsession with their own money-making, tyranny-inducing, and power-grabbing

institutions, which to them come before God and scripture, and before Muslims and their *qiblah*.

For these “wheeler-dealers” the stakes are high: it is either their financial empire that devours the world, with blessings from churches and synagogues, ministers and rabbis; or an Islamic *qiblah* that seeks to make justice and equality a fact of life even if that means bringing down the financial and Masonic world order.¹³ Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations¹⁴ — blessed by the Judeo-Christian establishment — actually fear an Islamic *qiblah* that would eventually eclipse their bogus world order and bring genuine liberty, freedom, equality and justice to the human race. When the media mouthpieces in Europe and America refer to Muslims on this level of understanding and commitment as “terrorists” they are actually expressing their instinctive fear of Islam.

On the other hand, the same “Judeo-Christian” leviathan is satisfied if the “Joe Blow” Muslim reduces his *qiblah* to a prayer direction rather than considering it a symbol of independence, autonomy, and Islamic self-determination. This Euro-American monster is pleased with Muslims who have shifted the tasks and objectives of the *qiblah* from Makkah to New York, Geneva, London, and Washington, DC. These, we are told by the Western propaganda pieces, are the “civilized” Muslims! This Yahūdi-Masonic, Judeo-Christian hatred of Islam is so refined, and so well-disguised, that they have even managed to enlist Muslim scholars to bless this secularization of the *qiblah*, quoting *āyāt* and hadiths out of context to support its trivialization.

This is quite an accomplishment by contemporary Jews and Christians, even allowing for the fact that they have the whole weight and structure of officialdom on their side in their campaign to paint the Muslims with words like savage, extremist, terrorist, reactionary and fanatic — all words that describe them more accurately than they describe Muslims. These Jews and Christians, established and entrenched in power, are using that power to commit the hate crime of history. But you would not know that by reading their newspapers, listening to their programs, and watching

their movies, for these are some of the “paramilitary” weapons used against Muslims.

This is a war of nerves and brains before it is a war of flesh and blood. That is why it is urgently necessary for Muslims to wake up and look at reality as defined in this *āyah*, **“And yet, even if you were to place all evidence before those who received earlier scriptures, they would not follow your *qiblah*...” (2:145).** The Prophet (ﷺ) took the Islamic experience deep into the religious, cultural, historical, and contemporary reality of Bible-toting Jews and Christians. But the way they reacted to him, their derision and ridicule, solicited this eternal verdict by Allah (ﷻ) on “interfaith” relations.

In answer to this wilfully wrongheaded response by the Judeo-Christian lobby, Allah (ﷻ), the Glorious and Commanding, instructed His Prophet (ﷺ) with these words, **“And neither are you to espouse their *qiblah*.”** It was never meant for the Muslims to be followers of their emasculated and conceptually deformed *qiblah*. It is not acceptable that Muslims, provided with this true and invigorating Book from Allah (ﷻ), should even acknowledge the distorted Judeo-Christian idea of a *qiblah*, in which church is separated from state, clergymen are toadies of statesmen, the fraternity of the lodge is more important than the fraternity of the church, and where Satan is more “exciting” than God. And it does not behoove the Muslims to distort their *qiblah* in the same manner. Allah (ﷻ) has given us a *qiblah*. The only thing we need to do now is to energize it; and that can only be done when our thoughts and minds are clear and guided purely by these meanings of the noble Qur’an.

Muslims the world over have to reassemble themselves at al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. Their strategies, their planning sessions, and their decision-making have to be in Makkah: an open Makkah, an inviting Makkah, and an accommodating Makkah, the seat of the Ka’bah and the confluence of all the Ummah’s hopes and aspirations. And yet, the way this world is configured today, Makkah is almost off-limits to Muslims. Restrictions on travelling to Makkah are increasing year by year and from generation to generation. Official Saudi policies have reduced Makkah to something like an

Islamic Vatican. Thanks to these Saudi policies and laws, Makkah is no longer the seat of a genuine and meaningful *qiblah*. Makkah and Madinah have been neutered; they no longer have any ideological, doctrinal, political, social, or inspirational value. Even when the normal Muslim offers his *ṣalāh*, be it thousands of miles away or only a few miles away, he or she is only marginally aware that he faces toward Makkah — not toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām with all its functions as a *qiblah*. Thus has the *qiblah* been deinstitutionalized, minimized, and weakened.

The facts are declared by these words from heaven, **“nor even are they [the Jews and Christians] abiding by each other’s *qiblah*” (2:145)**. If the word *qiblah* is understood to mean a center of power, then we can search for the meanings of this *āyah* in the world around us. Look at those who claim to be Jews and Christians. They have so many seats of power that their domain appears to be a world of smoke and mirrors. Their differences run deep and their hostilities are legion. Intractable animosity flows routinely among the many “religions” of Christianity: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants. Similarly, there is rancor and resentment among the many factions of Jews: Orthodox, Conservative, and Liberal. And there is the dark, unfathomable enmity between Jews and Christians, which both today subliminally seek to deny by focusing on Islam and Muslims. Their *qiblahs* are numerous; they are peoples without focus or direction in their lives. After their formal and religious adoption of secularism, they have — besides their Jerusalem *qiblah* — a Washington *qiblah*, a London *qiblah*, a Paris *qiblah* and a Rome *qiblah*. They consider Canterbury and the Vatican *qiblahs* of sorts, as well as Istanbul and Moscow. These people who verbally identify with earlier scriptures cannot consolidate a central *qiblah*. **“Nor even are they abiding by each other’s *qiblah*.”**

Ironically, as the Muslims have lost the substance and sense of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām as the *qiblah*, the Jews have gained some sense of Solomon’s Temple as their *qiblah*. Today they are working behind the scenes to cancel Tel Aviv as their seat of power and finally relocate “religion” and “politics” to Jerusalem, an effort that has

approval, support, and sustenance from Freemason lodges and the fellowships of Saudi largess.¹⁵

After giving this vivid picture of how Jews and Christians subordinate their faith to their materialist interests, thus secularizing God's religion, the words of the Qur'an change direction, addressing the Prophet (ﷺ), **"And if you [O Muhammad] should follow their erring views after all the knowledge that has come to you, you would surely be among the offenders" (2:145)**. In other words, Allah (ﷻ) is warning the Prophet (ﷺ) against making the same mistake of adopting a different *qiblah*, that is, putting something else before his faith in Allah (ﷻ).

Why should Muslims choose any other *qiblah*? Why would Muslims reduce to "nothingness" the *qiblah* in Makkah appointed by Allah (ﷻ)? Why would Muslims lose sight of the meaning of *qiblah*? Why would Muslims dislodge Makkah from its central status to become what it is today: a city on the margin of world affairs and events? Remember, in the *āyāt* immediately before this section, Allah (ﷻ) was characterizing the Muslims as the *central ummah*: *ummataṅ wasaṭā*. Now He immediately follows up by identifying the *qiblah* as the center of this central *ummah*. But how did the Muslims manage to lose their own central role among the inhabitants of the world? And, in the process, how did they manage to lose the centrality of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām among themselves?

The short answer is: Muslims have lost all contact with power. They no longer have it and they no longer relate to it; thus they are drifters when it comes to these *āyāt* and their implications in the real world. In the modern world setup, Makkah has been superseded by Washington as the de facto center of the world, and al-Masjid al-Ḥarām has been superseded by the White House as the world *qiblah*. Now the Yahūdī Jerusalem is moving to replace both. In the meantime many Muslims are wandering and straying in any and every direction but that of their own *qiblah*. The Qur'an is resolute in stating this, because in those early days some Muslims were susceptible to the Yahūdī characterization of affairs, just as nowadays many Muslims, whose scholarship is subordinate to Yahūdī "dollarship," are taken in by a Yahūdī description of matters.

It was recently reported that the Israeli government had asked the Palestinian National Authority in Ghazzah to ban TV and radio from broadcasting some *āyāt* from *Sūrah*s *al-Baqarah* and *al-Mā'idah*. The Israelis said the broadcasting of such *āyāt* constitutes agitation of the Palestinian public which is prohibited by the Wye River accords between the Israelis and the PLO (1998).¹⁶ In a parallel development the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), which works to assist Palestinian refugees, also expressed the desire to delete similar Qur'anic *āyāt* from textbooks used in the schools that it supervises. Dr. As'ad 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who is the official in charge of refugee affairs, said this himself, according to reports dated November 21, 1998.¹⁷ A recent film called *The Arab Dream (al-Ḥilm al-'Arabī)* was also objected to by the Yahūdī authorities.¹⁸ This short film — about ten minutes long — recaptures the misery and agony, the resistance and fight, the death and destruction, and the hopes and fears of all the peoples who have been victimized by the Zionist regime for the past 50 years. The Israeli authorities also demanded that this film should be taken off the air because it violates the Wye River accords. After the 9/11 incident, Lynne Cheney, the wife of then US Vice President Dick Cheney, led a delegation to Saudi Arabia to reform primary and secondary school textbooks by removing all references to Yahūd, *mushriks*, jihad, and *qitāl*.¹⁹

Faced with such demands, the powerless Palestinian authority behaved exactly like the rest of its powerless Arabian counterparts that litter the Middle East: they all, sooner or later, acceded to the Yahūdī diktat. But when the Yahūd begin to fear the public recitation of *āyāt* from the Qur'an, it is a sure sign that the Muslims are beginning to understand the Qur'an's words and intents, *wal-ḥamdu lillāh*.

The Qur'an then reiterates that these Jews and Christians, as much as they camouflage themselves and try to hide the truth, do in fact know the Qur'anic words to be the truth. The Qur'an is equally clear that they know Allah's Prophet (ﷺ). But they deny and hide this fact simply because their "interests," which can be traced to their collective selfishness, dictate this grand conceal-

ment of God's truth, "People who were given earlier scriptures know it [the Scripture] as they know their own children; but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the truth" (2:146).

If you know someone or something as well as you know your children, then you know it very well indeed. Collectively, if not individually, these followers of the Bible know the Qur'an and Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) as they know their own children; and that being the case, there is no basis for Muslims making believe that Jews and Christians are lacking true knowledge and that we Muslims are duty-bound to show them the truth about Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet (ﷺ). In light of this clear *āyah*, those Muslims who are spending their time, effort, and resources on *da'wah* programs in hopes of achieving a breakthrough with the "People of the Book" are either not versed in the meanings of the Qur'an, or are deliberately seeking an escape from their responsibilities to reconstruct a fully-fledged Islamic reality on earth with Makkah as its hub. The best form of *da'wah* for the rest of humanity would, in any case, be for Muslims to establish an Islamic society that demonstrates the reality of Islam. This would achieve more than all of these *da'wah* programs combined.

At this state of elevated awareness about the scripturalist responsible for the sway of political power — imperialists and Zionists — as opposed to the one who is the victim of political powers, and at this point in the conscious development by Allah (ﷻ) of His subjects, He says, "**The truth is from your Sustainer: be not, then, among the vacillators**" (2:147). Of course, we all know that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not vacillate or waver for one moment concerning this message from the Almighty. In another *āyah* Allah (ﷻ) says to His Prophet (ﷺ), "**And so, if you are in doubt about [the truth of] what We have [now] bestowed upon you from on high, ask those who read the divine writ [revealed] before your time...**" (10:94). And when the Prophet (ﷺ) heard this *āyah* his response was, "I do not doubt [this Book] and will not ask [the Biblical scholars]." ²⁰

Remember Allah's (ﷻ) words, "**And if you [O Muhammad] should follow their desires after all the knowledge that has come**

to you, you would indeed be among the offenders...” and “The truth is from your Sustainer; be not then among the vacillators...” For all intents and purposes, imagine then the words we deserve for abandoning our God-given *qiblah* and raising the rank of the White House above that of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, and for raising the status of Washington above that of Makkah. This is practically what we have done, if we dare to admit it. These *āyāt* and many others were meant to immunize the Muslims against Yahūdī brainwashing. When we do not take our Qur’anic medication, we leave ourselves open to infection by Yahūdī propaganda — an infection that attacks our minds first, and then paralyzes our collective body.

These *āyāt* are the balm for today’s ramshackle and dilapidated Muslims, who have become a diaspora by their abandonment of the only true *qiblah* left in the world. There are Muslims today who, in their subservience to *kufir*, feel honored to study in faculties and institutions that teach self-serving Western views of Islam, the Qur’an, Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). To add insult to injury, these “educated” Muslims feel even more honored to be considered worthy of teaching these half-baked ideas on Islam to others. We have a pathetic class of university graduates who yearn to graduate in “Islamic” studies from Oxford or Cambridge, John Hopkins or Georgetown, or the Sorbonne. Non-Muslim orientalist have become the authorities on Islam for these “costume Muslims” whose highest ambition is to be honored by a PhD from these Zionist and imperialist “Islamic scholars.”

These *qiblah*-less Muslims actually believe they are involved in gaining real Islamic knowledge; in fact their minds are being filled with doubts, uncertainty and even distrust of the Qur’an and Sunnah by a *kāfir* professor or instructor. And all too many of these students are encouraged, after years of studying at the feet of the enemies of Islam, to return home with certification from these *kāfirs* to spread their uncertainties and doubts through the local institutions of higher learning in their own countries.

This is yet another manifestation of a hollow *ummaḥ*; the fact that this Ummah no longer has its own heavenly-certified *qiblah* is reflected in the minds of its new generations. Why should Makkah

and Madinah not have the best Islamic universities and the most advanced knowledge on all the Islamic specialties: fiqh, history, sociology, Qur'an, Hadith, the Arabic language, and philosophy? No longer being the Muslims' *qiblah*, as the *qiblah* was meant to be, Makkah has not only lost its political and ideological esteem but also its intellectual value. Makkah is meant by Allah (ﷻ) to be the *qiblah* of all Muslims where, at least, the Muslims expect to be clear on who is *Ahl al-Kitāb* and who is Zionist Yahūd and imperialist *naṣārā*. But thanks to the Saudi stranglehold on these two vital areas, American and Israeli officialdom are conveniently dubbed *Ahl al-Kitāb*! The alleged *Ahl al-Kitāb* status of the USA, Europe, and Israel is so important that the 65 million Muslims in Iran were deemed to be outside the pale of Islam when Imam Khomeini took on the evil Zionist-imperialist duopoly in the region. The bogus *Ahl al-Kitāb* status of the same worldwide imperialists and Zionists is so ingrained in Saudi officialdom that their dear brother of yesterday, Saddam Hussein — the defender of Arabianism and Islam, the modern day Ṣalāḥuddīn — all-of-a-sudden, when he invaded Kuwait, became a villain whose evil had to be defeated by a Saudi alliance with *Ahl al-Kitāb* in Washington, London, Paris, and Tel Aviv.²¹

Allah's (ﷻ) concern for this Ummah and His love for it are timeless. He saw our behavior and advised us before it is too late. He is telling us in these *āyāt* to stop listening to those who wish us no good. Their social sciences are but a detraction from this divine writ. Muslims should assimilate the meanings of the Qur'an in mind and in heart together, and ignore the distractions of the Zionist-imperialist interests. They have their interests and we have ours.

For everyone has a direction of his own to which he turns. Vie, therefore with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, Allah will gather you all unto Himself: for, verily, Allah overpowers everything (2:148).

It is these commandments from Allah (ﷻ) that will spare us the distortions and twisting, the sedition and meddling, and the misin-

formation and trespassing of Jews and Christians into our Islamic domain. Let us make it possible by defeating the strangulators of Makkah and Madinah, and vying instead in moral feats, as we are all consciously tied to our eventual return to Allah (ﷻ). At the same time, the adventurers who seek to cause havoc in our midst are also on their way to Allah (ﷻ). All their worldly tricks will not escape His notice. These *āyāt* should raise us to the level of serious-mindedness, especially as we are now paying a heavy price for our short-sighted understanding of this guiding Writ.

Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām Gives Makkah Distinction

Thus, from wherever you may exit [move on], turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām — for, behold, this is the *ḥaqq* [truth and fact] from your Sustainer; and Allah is not unmindful of what you do (2:149).

Notice in this *āyah* that Allah (ﷻ) does not tell the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslims praying with him to turn toward Makkah. He specifically tells them, and us by extension, to turn toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. It is because of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām that Makkah gained its importance and status; it is al-Masjid al-Ḥarām that gives Makkah its aura of sanctity and holiness. Therefore, contrary to what many textbooks tell readers about Muslims turning in prayer to Makkah, Allah (ﷻ) in these words of the impeccable Scripture orders Muslims to turn toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. No Muslim can have any doubt about the centrality of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to the Ummah. This *āyah* places al-Masjid al-Ḥarām at the core of concentration for all Muslims as they commune with Allah (ﷻ) during their regular *ṣalāḥs* day and night. Visualize how Allah (ﷻ) intends this *masjid* to be: the heart and the hearth of all Muslims. Then visualize how the Saudi satraps have drained al-Masjid al-Ḥarām of its purpose and status. We, the Muslims of the world, often do not have access to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām for Hajj and ‘Umrah, much less as the combined civic and religious focal point

for our common decisions, our common future, and our common strategies. It is comforting to have the following words thunder against such quislings in Jeddah and Riyadh, “**And Allah is not ignorant of what you do.**”

This is a timely response to the secular and nationalist pseudo-Muslims who have degraded al-Masjid al-Ḥarām from the focal point of Muslim life, and reduced it to a symbol stamped by Muslims once a year during the Hajj rush. It cannot be that Allah (ﷻ) is unaware of the deliberate Saudi policies to dilute the value of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. Allah (ﷻ) is not absent-minded to the Saudi rules and regulations, forbidding Muslims from amplifying the dignity and sanctity of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, because of their specious claims about this being a *bid‘ah*. And Allah (ﷻ) is not oblivious when it comes to the larger scheme of disconnecting the Muslims from the retreat of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, where they should be free to travel, assemble, and discuss their concerns and affairs. Allah (ﷻ) knows very well their tactics and their strategy.

Then these *āyāt* refute the assertions of people of earlier scripture, as well as others, who disparaged the Muslims because they were directing themselves to the Jewish *qiblah*. In this *qiblah* clash — the Yahūdī vs. the Islamic — there were opportunists waiting for the slightest indication to accept Yahūdī propaganda that the Muslims were simply imitating Jews. If the Jewish *qiblah* is the real thing, their reasoning went, their understanding of God and scripture must also be the real thing. There were also Arabian *mushriks* who asserted that those who turned away from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām were traitors and apostates because they had abandoned the age-old Arabian traditions, customs, heritage, and culture, so intertwined with al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. These *mushriks*, the enemies of Muhammad (ﷺ) and Islam, condemned the Prophet (ﷺ) for forsaking the Arabian al-Masjid al-Ḥarām for the *qiblah* of Banū Isrā‘īl. When the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslims found themselves between two fires, the Israeli Yahūd and the Arabian *mushriks*, Allah’s (ﷻ) soothing words gave them comfort and confidence,

Hence, from wherever you may proceed, turn your face [in devout orientation] toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces toward it, so that people should have no [valid] argument against you, unless they are bent on unfairness. And hold not them in awe, but stand in awe of Me, [and obey Me,] so that I may bestow upon you the full measure of My blessings, and that you might be guided (2:150).

This was a tense period of character and community development. On one side the Yahūd had intensified their campaigns against Muslims who were friendly and brotherly toward them, and even shared their *qiblah*. On the other side the Arabian *mushriks* were making accusations of treachery and treason against the Muslims for refusing to accept the traditional and cultural meanings of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, preferring instead to follow the divine commandments. Being located in the propaganda firing line of Yahūd and Arabians, the Prophet (ﷺ) was instructed by the eternal words,

Thus, from wherever you may come forth [from this firing line position], turn your face [in earnest orientation] toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; and wherever you all may be [in the same firing line between Yahūd and your own cultural establishment], turn your faces toward it, so that people should have no [valid] argument against you (2:150).

We need to look at the enduring meanings of this *āyah*. It is well-known that committed Muslims are culture-free: they do not carry with them, into their Islamic sphere of activities and commitments, the baggage of centuries of hereditary and habitual customs or rules. But how does one purge the strong cultural attachment of a community or individual? Allah (ﷻ) transformed these first generation Muslims by guiding them to identify with a non-Arabian symbol that was still an Islamic one — the *qiblah* in al-Quds — thus forcing them to leave behind any cultural attachment they may

have had for al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. However at this point, the Yahūdī-Israeli forces, placing their own racist cultural interpretation on religion, could not tolerate the Muslim goyim identifying with al-Quds. In both cases the Muslims were sincerely trying to recognize the God-given authenticity of the status of the two holy places. And in both cases they were ridiculed by those who had deformed Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* by centuries and generations of community routine, tribal folklore and racial fixations.

Allah (ﷻ) had to make the final decision for these honest and sincerely yielding Muslims. He did so by telling them to move out of this firing line by finally and conclusively reclaiming al-Masjid al-Ḥarām as their *qiblah*, which had by then been cleansed of its cultural accretions. The battle lines today are similar. Muslims who are trying their utmost to live up to the pristine standards of the Qur'an and Sunnah find they are still in the firing line of Yahūd. The Qur'an and Sunnah make it clear that Jerusalem does not belong to racist Israelis and Yahūdī bigots, who have stolen it from its rightful owners and are trying to turn it into the center of a world dominated by racist Yahūdī politicians and rabbis. At the same time, these Muslims, trying sincerely to follow the example of Muhammad (ﷺ), are under fire from Arabians who have made Makkah into a cultural outpost of the Saudi family and marginalized al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. They have stolen al-Masjid al-Ḥarām from the Muslim Ummah as surely as the Zionists have stolen al-Quds, and are likewise trying to destroy its true value as the *qiblah* of the global Muslim Ummah.

Both of these camps call forth all the traditional and status quo understanding of their culturalized Judaism and Islam to thwart the Muhammadi Muslims from regaining the *qiblah*. When the Muslims in the Ummah wake up to these meanings and translate them into determinations and decisions, then the superficial crust of cultural Yahūd and ceremonial Muslims will wither away. This is another way of saying that there will always be those cultural Yahūd and traditional Muslims who will take their erroneous attitude to its mistaken end. Just listen to what the state-sponsored rabbis and imams have to say about this Qur'anic command. Each side is

affixed to its conventional and racial “superiority.” The Yahūdī side has enlisted worldwide support on the basis of a faulty understanding and interpretation of the Bible, and the Saudis have enlisted Muslim support on the basis of a faulty understanding and interpretation of the Qur’an. But this should not deter the Islamic movement from its duties and responsibilities. If Muslims are incapable of recognizing the Saudi stain on their contemporary record, they are just as guilty of bias and prejudice as those Jews who are unable to point out the Israeli stain and stigma on their contemporary record. How soothing in this context are Allah’s (ﷻ) everlasting words, **“Do not fear them — but fear Me...”**

This is precisely where fear begins to set in: when you know that you have an external enemy (racist Israel), as well as an internal one (the Saudi kingship). If their aggregate wealth is added up, they are probably the world’s premier financial empire; and when their supporters’ military might is considered, it would seem stupendous. But remember, committed Muslims have Allah (ﷻ) on their side when they are doing His will, so these seemingly gigantic figures become nothing to worry about as they are nothing but mere midgets and deluded dwarfs. Allah (ﷻ) has everything under control because He operates and moderates the affairs of the world that is, and the world to be. While Allah (ﷻ) is reminding Muslims of His power along with the “power-show” of the religiously tyrannical and the fanatically racist, He says to those who work His will, **“...and [obey Me,] so that I may carry out and complete My blessings upon you, and that you might be guided.”**

Allah’s (ﷻ) grace and blessings do not come in a vacuum. A God-given blessing or benediction comes after Muslims have been put in a state of human fear by other humans whose powers appear superior but who in comparison to Allah (ﷻ) are ineffectual. One can appreciate this bounty of blessings, as those early Muslims did, only when he has made that demanding transition from the status of *kufir* into a state of Islam. The *kāfir* establishment is so rotten, so atrocious, and so woeful that when it is forsaken by the committed Muslims, it is forsaken not only as a system but with all the traditions, customs, habits, culture, and lore associated with a *kāfir* way of life.

The *kāfir* system and establishment thrives on peoples being antagonistically divided on any basis that would consolidate the vested interests of the power elites who use traditions and culture to buttress their established position in the status quo. Race, tribe, gender, class, nationalism and color are some of the bases on which tradition, culture and even “religion” are mobilized to serve the higher interests of the power elites. The weak Muslims of Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia, Egypt, and so many other places, will appreciate Allah’s (ﷻ) blessing that comes from having a genuine and meaningful *qiblah* in Makkah, in the context of a global Islamic society. In contrast to the alienation they presently feel in the international *kāfir* system, they will be radically transformed and immensely charged with the power of Islam, would the Makkan *qiblah* be recharged with the vitality the Prophet (ﷺ) placed therein.

Before this energizing *āyah* designated al-Masjid al-Ḥarām as the power center of the Ummah, and therefore upgraded the status of Makkah, the Arabians considered Makkah to be their literary, cultural, and “national” *qiblah*. But al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and its surrounding dwellings were, by and large, of no significance to the world around. The empires of Persia and Rome were not concerned with this desolate and remote nomadic enclave on the barren sands of Arabia. Likewise, the Jewish *qiblah* in Jerusalem was of no major consequence to the Romans and Persians, as the Romans had a few generations earlier destroyed Jewish dissent, virtually finishing the last remnants of Jewish resistance at Masada.²² With these *āyāt*, al-Masjid al-Ḥarām gained an aura as the Muslims’ *qiblah*, eclipsing the characters of both the Arabians and the Jews. The new *qiblah* — and with it, the new community of people educated by the Qur’an and Sunnah — rearranged the power centers, the power balance, and the power configurations of human societies on earth. This was how Allah (ﷻ) carried through and fulfilled His amplitude and bounty upon these Arabian-cum-Arabs. Not only did al-Masjid al-Ḥarām’s *qiblah* transcend the cultural, national, and racial status of Makkah among the Arabians, and Jerusalem among the people of the Bible, it also dwarfed the ideo-

logical, political, and military status of Rome and Shiraz. That is what a *qiblah* is. And Muslims the world over should lament the fact that Makkah today has been reduced by the Saudi Arabian “royals” to its pre-Islamic stasis. Now, as in the days of *jāhiliyah*, Makkah is dormant, overtaken as a centre of history and civilization by Washington and New Delhi, by Rome and Tel Aviv, and also by the Vatican and Jerusalem. Even lesser places such as Belgrade and Canterbury have outpaced the Saudi Makkah. And we need not go so far away: even within the Arabian peninsula, the Saudi secularization of Islam has reduced Makkah and Madinah to the strictly ritual and “religious,” while the Saudi cities of Jeddah and Riyadh have picked up the political and vital decision-making roles that rightfully belong to the Prophet’s (ﷺ) two cities.

Muslims should understand that Allah (ﷻ) will give them the full measure of His benefaction only when they emerge victorious from all their cultural shells and break out of their national boundaries, thereby having free access to their divinely-consecrated *qiblah*. Only when this social aspect of the Ummah’s relationship with al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is reinstated may we expect Allah (ﷻ) to fulfill his pledge, **“And so that I may complete my bounty and blessings upon you.”**

In recounting this episode, the Qur’an highlights the Yahūdī propaganda and rumor mill — the media and public opinion manufacturers of the day — as being so influential that the words of Allah (ﷻ) had to be reiterated and etched into the hearts and minds of the Muslims. Muslims today, regrettably, tend to be influenced by the mass media and not by the Qur’an’s message. This Qur’an provides, besides many other things, spiritual immunity against rumor-mongers, their contortions of issues, and their slanted presentation of events to fit prejudices that serve their agenda.

These *āyāt* are as effective and therapeutic today as they were 14 centuries ago, just as fossilized culture and ossified scripture are as challenging today as they were when this Qur’an was revealed.

The Divine Expression of Wisdom (*Hikmah*)

After this break with the effects and forces of dominant culture and ancestral “nationalism,” the momentous *āyāt* of the Qur’an mesmerize the Muslim mind on Allah’s (ﷻ) abounding *ni’mah* (blessing), part of which is His privilege upon Muhammad (ﷺ) and the hitherto wandering Arabians with whom his mission commenced. This was finally, after several generations, Allah’s (ﷻ) response to the *du‘ā’* of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) who built al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. The following *āyāt* endear Allah (ﷻ) to the Muslims after they prove their commitment to Him,

Likewise, We have sent unto you an apostle from among yourselves to impart to you Our involvement [in your world], and to cause you to grow in prudence, and to teach you scripture and wisdom, and to teach you that which you knew not. So remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful to Me, and deny Me not (2:151–152).

This *āyah* corresponds to the previous one in which Ibrāhīm, while building the foundations of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām with his son Ismā’il (ﷺ), calls upon Allah (ﷻ) to appoint of his posterity an apostle who would hail from the vicinity of this sanctuary — someone who would convey Allah’s (ﷻ) involvement in their worldly matters, who would teach them scripture and wisdom, and who would raise them to a level of responsibility and maturity. So the early Muslims with a fresh *qiblah* were not “inventing” or fabricating their own *qiblah*. They had a substantial historical link to the founder of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. And when the conditions and circumstances were right Allah (ﷻ) answered Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) prayer, hence the leading role of these race-free and culture-free Muslims. By extension, this would be equally applicable to today’s committed Muslims.

And as the *qiblah* does not lend itself to any national or ethnic pride, the fact that Muhammad (ﷺ) is an Arab should not contribute to any national or ethnic pride, **“Likewise, We have sent to you an apostle from among yourselves.”** Of course this is an

honor; but from the numerous Qur’anic anecdotes about Banū Isrā’īl, it should now be known that honor does not beget a licence to be prejudiced, discriminatory, or bigoted. These Arabians-cum-Arabs now had the Scripture and the Apostle (ﷺ) as a trust; but by now they had become humbled enough to know they could not use this honor to claim some type of “chosen race” status. Remember, this is the same Apostle (ﷺ) who the Yahūd, the source of the original racism and elitism, were “bragging” about before his advent.

“He [Muhammad] imparts to you Our involvement [in your world of deeds]. Whatever he is telling you about Us is the truth and the reality (ḥaqq)” (2:251). Allah (ﷻ) is speaking to the bearers of the Qur’an as His servants in front-line positions of duty and responsibility. Only a few years back, they had been at the bottom of the world’s social pecking order. But now, after an arduous period of tempering, Allah (ﷻ) privileged them with this sanctity (the *qiblah*), the Qur’an, and the Apostle Muhammad (ﷺ). Why Allah (ﷻ) selected these desert nomads to become the initial human purveyors of His trust will remain a question that solicits the best objective answers. What follows are a combination of circumstances and characteristics that might contribute to a partial understanding of this issue:

1. Their nomadic and bedouin lifestyle kept them at the peripheries of modernity in one sense, while in another sense, it qualified them for the spartan task ahead as they were not spoiled by the comfort and leisure of affluent societies.
2. Their whole history, unlike other known peoples’, was one of perfecting the delivery or communication of their human experience through their language: Arabic. The intimate relationship between human emotions and the human experience and then capturing it in the Arabic language, on the one hand, and the well-thought-out foundations and structure of the Arabic language to enable this to happen on the other, made the language particularly suited to stating and expressing the meanings of what they came to know as the final Scripture, the Qur’an.
3. The Arabians were a desert people; they were not blessed with

an abundant source of fresh water. Unlike other great and influential civilizations in history, which were born around easy access to water, the Islamic civilization emerged from a part of the earth where there was little available fresh water. To some extent an environment shapes the nature of the people who inhabit it. Thus in areas where fresh water is plentiful, the soil is rich with nutrients and thereby the people are robust in mind, spirit, and body. Not so with the bleak and parsimonious desert. To transform these unsettled nomads into the peak of civilizational prowess without the benefit of the most essential natural resources is nothing short of a miracle and points to the glory of Allah's (ﷻ) power, favor, and program.

“And causes you to grow in prudence.” This is the favor of Allah (ﷻ) upon the bearers of this Qur'an-in-motion: that they shall grow through their experiences, and that they, through this transformational experience, will mature enough to see how important it is to be liberated from the prejudices and biases of both ancestral and scriptural ties. Undergoing this struggle for social and psychological liberation will contribute to their maturity and purity. Had it not been for Allah (ﷻ) guiding them through this overwhelming complexity, they probably would have made the wrong decisions or would not have known how to proceed. But Allah (ﷻ) sent His Apostle to lead them through this social and civil cleansing process. When al-Masjid al-Ḥarām was assigned to them as their *qiblah*, they knew from experience that it was more than just a prayer-direction, more than just an element of ritual. They knew from the tension and verbal hostility coming from internal and external cultural shells, Arabian and Yahūdī respectively, that the *qiblah* meant not only “religious” and “cultural” independence but also ideological and political independence. Emerging from this experience, their sovereign status was elevated to the plateau of *tawḥīd*, away from *shirk*. This energetic *qiblah* serves as a reminder every time committed Muslims concentrate on Allah (ﷻ) in their *ṣalāh* that their direction, in all moments and years of life, is independent, autonomous and liberated.

Their discretion with this new *qiblah* places them on the moral high ground of humanity. Other seats of power and religious centers in the world are polluted by sexuality, infidelity, greed, and crime. Opportunism and self-interest are the hallmarks of all other *qiblahs*. But this *qiblah*, the *qiblah* of the Muslims, causes those who accept it to grow in spiritual and physical purity. When the human impulses of greed, self-interest, abnormal possession, and rapacity are psychologically absent from this *qiblah* orientation, then usury, cheating, blackmail, theft, and greed are absent from society. As these are all sins and crimes that pollute soul and society together, getting on a program to overcome them will purge life of injustice. Never will humanity experience the true and encompassing meaning of justice until it orients itself toward Allah (ﷻ), accepts His uncorrupted Scripture, and places all theories thereof into practice.

“And teaches you scripture and wisdom.” Notice that the word *teach* in the above sentence follows a human experience. Teaching was not done in a vacuum. The way Allah (ﷻ) meant Muslims to learn was through human interaction. That is one reason why the Qur’an was taught over 23 years, unlike the educational systems and syllabi nowadays, where the Qur’an is memorized or recited for the purpose of producing a *ḥāfiẓ*. Has no one ever asked why we do not characterize any of those first-generation Muslims, who by all accounts were very familiar with the meanings of the Qur’an, as *ḥāfiẓs*?

The answer is in understanding a simple and abiding fact: the Qur’an is meant for implementation, not simply for memorization. The Qur’an is the only scripture left that has been meticulously preserved, without any changes to any of its words, since the instant it was revealed. The Qur’an is the only scripture that survives verbatim in theory and in fact; the only thing required of humans is to put it into practice. And to do so Muslims have to gain knowledge, understanding the wisdom of its significance and sense. And due to the Qur’an’s constancy and currency, Muslims of any generation can resuscitate the process that transformed the first generation of incomparable Muslims.

Allah (ﷻ), through the model of His Apostle Muhammad (ﷺ), infused the implementation of perceived meanings with wisdom: *ḥikmah*. So, in a sense, *ḥikmah* is the retrospective advantage that Muslims enjoy when they emerge from their detailed or general situations to implement the intents and purposes of this Qur'an: individually or collectively, structurally or non-structurally, at a slow pace or at an accelerated pace. Through this hands-on and retrospective assessment and refinement, Muslims acquire the perspective necessary to determine what needs to be done in view of the realities, and with all pertinent things considered.

One definition of wisdom is the knowledge of what is right or true coupled with just judgment as to action, that is, sagacity, discernment or insight. But who is to say what is true and what is right? And conversely who is to say what is false and what is wrong? If this is left to humans, there will never be a uniform dissertation, a universal definition, or a concise explanation of *right* and *wrong*. If, however, this is left to a deity or divinity, then we as humans would be required to exercise our God-given mind, judging as to the appropriateness, suitability, depth, and reach of sagacious thought belonging to such meanings and definitions.

Hikmah (wisdom) is a word that is mentioned 20 times in the faultless Qur'an. On ten of these occasions, the word is used as an adjective to qualify the word *al-kitāb*, meaning the Qur'an. This in and of itself is a powerful indication of not only the importance of *ḥikmah* as a value and quality, but also to the fact that wisdom and its source are conjoined. Let us take a look at some human attempts to define the word *wisdom*.

We are told, for instance by Felix Adler, that “wisdom consists in the highest use of the intellect for the discernment of the largest moral interest of humanity,” begging the question of who defines the largest moral interest of humanity.²³ Similar problems arise from other definitions, which include,

Felix Adler: Working from the better for the love of the best.

Aeschylus: Wisdom comes by suffering.²⁴

The commonly used, but distorted, versions of the scriptural Bible contain the following comments on wisdom,

The spirit of human love. (Apocrypha, Wisdom of Solomon, 1:6)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (1 Corinthians, 3:19, New King James Version).

For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. (Ecclesiastes, 1:18, English Standard Version).

...Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. (Job, 32:7, King James Version).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalms, 111:10, New King James Version)

We notice in the above biblical descriptions that there is no mention of man's acquisition of wisdom from God through a learning process, as is the general description of *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an. Let us now go on to other human intellectuals or philosophers who tried to define or describe wisdom.

Ambrose Bierce: A special knowledge in excess of all that is known.

Ludwig Boerne: Pain is father, and love the mother of wisdom.

Gerald Brenan: Keeping the sense of the fallibility of all our views and opinions.

Thomas Carlyle: The highest achievement of man.

John Ciardi: The sad smile with which we recognize our own motives in a fool.

Cicero: The knowledge of things human and divine and of the cause by which those things are controlled.

William Congreve: Pretending to know and believe more than we really do.

Adapted from Nathaniel Cotton: To stand prepared to meet the worst.

Denis Diderot: Never to repent and never to reproach others, these are the first steps to wisdom.

Norman Douglas: A collection of platitudes.

Alexander Dumas: Two words — wait and hope.

Ralph Waldo Emerson: To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours.

Ralph Waldo Emerson: To see the miraculous in the common.

Paul Engle: Knowing when you can't be wise.

Jonah Gerondi: The ability to do good and to abandon sin.

Homer: To read aright the present, and to march with the occasion.

Herbert C. Hoover: Knowing what to do next.

Francis I. Hutcheson: Denotes the pursuing of the best ends by the best means.

William James: Knowing what to overlook.

Gottfried W. von Leibnitz: The science of happiness.

Gottfried W. von Leibnitz: The means of attaining the lasting contentment which consists in the continual achievement of a greater perfection or at least in variations of the same degree of perfection.

Leonard L. Levinson: Learning aged in wood.

Moses Maimonides: To recognize that there is an original Being ... and that all ... exist only through the reality of His being.

Adapted from John Milton: To know that which before us lies in daily life.

Peter Minard: The faculty of judging from the very viewpoint of Creator and Father.

Michel de Montaigne: To take things as they are, to endure what we cannot evade, to live and die well.

Napoleon I: The truest wisdom ... is a resolute determination.

Reinhold Neibuhr: The final wisdom of life requires not the annulment of incongruity but the achievement of serenity within and above it.

Pope Sixtus I: The chief aim ... is to enable one to bear with the stupidity of the ignorant.

Christina Rossetti: All things that pass
Are wisdom's
looking glass.

Saint Augustine: The greatest good.

Saint Gregory: Wise in words ... wise in deeds.

George Santayana: To believe the heart.

Adapted from Arthur Schnitzler: Taking all things as
much as possible seriously, but nothing too gravely.

Henry David Thoreau: Palpable falsehood till it come
and utter itself by my side.

John Greenleaf Whittier: Inward silence.

Anonymous: Something divided into two parts: (a) hav-
ing a great deal to say; (b) not saying it.

Anonymous: Making the most of all that comes, the
least of all that goes.²⁵

This is an attempt to bring together a wide range of statements on wisdom by Western personalities. And there is no doubt that some of these statements do convey insight, wit, and the ability of the human intellect to describe *wisdom*. But like everything else that is human, the attempt falls short of a comprehensive grasp of what *wisdom* really is. But in the Qur'an, Allah's (ﷻ) Word, there is that durable and abiding grip on the meaning of *wisdom*.

In the ten *āyāt* where the word *ḥikmah* (wisdom) directly follows the word *al-kitāb* (the Scripture), we begin to understand that *ḥikmah* is a follow-up or by-product of the human apprehension and understanding of Allah's (ﷻ) Scripture, His Book (see *āyāt* 2:129, 151, 231; 3:48, 81, 164; 4:54, 113; 5:110; and 62:2). One of these *āyāt* is given here,

He it is who has sent unto the unlettered people an apostle from among themselves, to convey unto them His messages, and to cause them to grow in purity, and to impart unto them the divine Writ as well as wisdom — whereas before that they were indeed, most obviously, lost in error (62:2).

And in the other 10 *āyāt* where the word is used, Allah (ﷻ) adds that “personal touch,”

And thereupon, by Allah’s leave, they routed them. And David slew Goliath; and Allah bestowed upon him dominion, and wisdom, and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed (2:251).

Allah (ﷻ) bestows upon David (ﷺ) rulership and *wisdom*, and imparts to him knowledge of whatever He willed. To refashion this idea for contemporary discourse, we can say that wisdom in this context is located between governance and science, or as others may say, between power and information. But all these are vitally linked to Allah (ﷻ), as He confers them upon whom He chooses.

...and Allah is Infinite [and] All-Knowing, granting wisdom to whom He wills; and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted assets galore (2:269).

Call [all mankind] to your Sustainer’s path with wisdom and goodly exhortation (16:125).

...and to teach you that which you knew not (2: 151).

And indeed the Prophet’s (ﷺ) experience did teach the nascent Islamic society in Madinah and Makkah things it had never known and things it would never have known. Had it not been for this breakthrough of combining better understanding of the Qur’an with better understanding of reality — as exemplified in the details

of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life from household ethics to battlefield conduct, that is, the Sunnah and Sirah — the wayward Arabian society could never have been characterized as an *Islamic* society.

Had it not been for this Islamic ideology, divine doctrine, and inspirational political leadership, how could pockets of deserted Arabians scattered on barren terrain come to experience the true mettle of those opposed to God on earth: *kāfirs*, *mushriks*, the Yahūd, and their ilk? These unengaged wanderers' knowledge went as high as pitching a tent and as far as hope for pasture would take them. Few cities existed in the Arabic speaking world of that time. But once the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ) appeared on the scene, these local Arabians were recast as global Arabs. With human attachment to Allah (ﷻ) and Muhammad (ﷺ), the sky became the limit and the world the arena for a new destiny.

The Qur'an was not a book of Arabian literature; the Prophet (ﷺ) was not the founding father of an Arabian nationalism; and Makkah, the Muslims' *qiblah*, was not the capital of a nation-state. Similarly, the *masjid* was not built for rituals and not meant to be separated from the vital decisions of the day. It was in the *masjid* that the global character of the Muslim was constructed. It was from the *minbar* (pulpit) that a transnational and universal message was presented. It was from the Prophet's (ﷺ) *masjid* that military, political, and financial policies were adopted based on the understanding of the Qur'an's imperatives and the Prophet's (ﷺ) directives. What a far cry from today's *masjids* in Arabia!

None in Arabia, or for that matter beyond Arabia, dare mention in practical terms and in clear language the meanings of the Qur'an and the explanations of the Sirah as they relate to the burning issues of our age and generation. In many so-called Muslim countries it is today unlawful to publicly express the things that were freely and openly discussed during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). Had they the ability to do so, the contemporary rulers of majority Muslim lands would even pass laws to make it illegal to express in one's own heart the crucial meanings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

God forbid any Muslim making a case for *ḥikmah* in the barren minds of self-styled Salafis and worldwide Wahhābis. Their

immediate retort would be their customary accusation: *bid'ah*, *bid'ah*, and more *bid'ah*. And if anyone dare refer to the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an, they will shout back that no one is qualified to render a *tafsīr* of the Qur'an. In other words, we, the Muslims who are addressed by this Qur'an, and we, the Muslims who are responsible for understanding the Qur'an, and we, the Muslims who should be developing the meanings of the Qur'an as human experience grows from one generation to the next — in the minds of these types of Muslims — are all incapable of understanding the lively meanings and redeeming substance of the Qur'anic text. And if any patient and thinking Muslim presses forward in this cogent discussion with these anti-intellectual Muslims, they will revert to their biggest verbal weapon, and accuse the thoughtful Muslim of *kufr*.

This is not, of course, meant to be a broadside against all those Muslims who consider themselves to be Salafis or Wahhābīs. There are undoubtedly many well-meaning, tolerant, and promising Muslims among them. But the loud voices and other activities of many who are claimants to Salafism and Wahhābism, coupled with financial largess and political clout, leave no doubt that these types do not and cannot produce a generation capable of fulfilling the promise and potential of the Scripture, the Prophet (ﷺ), and *ḥikmah*. With all the financial and material resources available to them, along with the emotional attachment of the world's Muslims, they have yet to foster a generation that could emulate the example of the generation led by the Prophet (ﷺ), when all these factors combined to bring about a just, moral, and *muttaqī* leadership for humanity.

The Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ) are still capable of shaping a generation that will lead once again in the name of Allah (ﷻ), provided that we Muslims discover the meanings of the Qur'an in the real and sobering world around us, while at the same time we become aware of the facts of the substantial world in the Qur'an. These are two open books: the Qur'an and creation. We should, with Allah's (ﷻ) presence and in His company, read their *āyāt* and their marks.

Plain for anyone with open eyes and a thinking mind lies an unfortunate sign of the times: the contrast between Makkah's

Arabs 1,400 years ago, who were poor, even poverty-stricken, but able to read, understand, and act on Allah's (ﷻ) Guidance; and Makkah's Arabians today who are rich, even flushed with wealth, but are unable to read, understand and actualize the meanings of the Qur'an. To add insult to injury, they rationalize this pathetic state of affairs with a show of religiosity that legitimizes claims to the inactivation of Qur'anic meanings, the fossilization of the Prophet's (ﷺ) dynamism, and the general passivity of character which they obliquely idolize.

Historical European *Kufr* Rebranded as Atheism

“So remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful to Me, and deny Me not.” This *āyah*, concluding the section presently under discussion, preempts the escapist arguments and inferiority complex riddling the likes of Saudi sycophants and their subsidiaries. Fourteen centuries before the toadies of Arabia glamorized American military prowess and proclaimed the modern West as “People of the Book” — even as many Western Christians have denounced the absence of scripture from American and European life — this *āyah* reminds the Muslims, **“So remember and know Me.”**

Time has a way of diminishing Allah (ﷻ) from minds and hearts; so too does the lavish lifestyle of hedonistic princes. The tribal tyrannies represented by the scions of Saud, and their counterparts across the Muslim world, need to heed these mighty words, **“So remember and recall Me.”** In other words, do not have short memories; and do not underestimate Allah's (ﷻ) corrective retribution. The Israelis suffered from a short memory, and they were decommissioned and relieved of their status of light unto the nations. Allah (ﷻ) is reminding us to never lose sight of Him: never dismiss Him in your calculations, never underrate Him in your plans, and never disregard Him in whatever you do.

We have been told here to think of and commemorate Allah (ﷻ) as he has oriented us toward a universal *qiblah*. He has favored us with the final and concluding Prophet (ﷺ) who taught us through

understanding, experience, trial, and error, to struggle for justice, to battle for equity, to know the identities of our enemies, and to keep our friends close. We must not forget this privilege. If we manage to keep His presence heightened in our hearts, His awe in our minds, and His power in our lives, then He will remember us, by extending more of the same to us, by aiding and helping us with whatever is required, and eventually by enabling us to triumph and succeed.

But how do we remember Allah (ﷻ)? We should never lose sight of the context in which this recollection of Allah (ﷻ) is mentioned. So how do we call to mind and bethink of Allah (ﷻ)? One way is to verbalize His attributes (*asmā' al-ḥusnā*) with both a compassionate and thoughtful awareness of these attributes. Another way is to bear in mind Allah's (ﷻ) innumerable premiums and bounties. This ought to be done privately and publicly, quietly and audibly. If devout Muslims remember, repeat, recount, and review the reality of Allah (ﷻ) in this theme of *qiblaḥ* assignment, then He will attend to their needs on earth. There is a hadith in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*,

*Allah says, "I shall reciprocate My subject's expectations: I am with him if he remembers [or recalls] Me. If he remembers Me in confidence I will remember him in confidence; and if he recalls Me in a public setting I will recall him in a more honorable public setting; and if he comes to Me in inches, I will come to him in yards..."*²⁶

This is a very profound statement, if only man realizes what Allah (ﷻ), the Glorious and Illustrious, is saying. Man is the one who needs Him while He is in no need whatsoever of man. But listen, He is saying in effect to human weaklings that if they bring Him to their attention, then He, the Eminent and Majestic, will bring them to His attention. But if they forget Allah (ﷻ), He will let justice take its course regardless of their residence (even if it is in Makkah and Madinah), regardless of their ancestors (even if they are the descendants of prophets and saints), and regardless of their names and titles (even if they are Muḥammads, Ibrāhīms, 'Alīs, and 'Umars).

Recalling Allah (ﷻ) and retrieving His reality are not done by tongue alone. The emotions and feelings of man need to be adjusted by thinking and contemplating, by jogging and refreshing the memory of Allah's (ﷻ) reality. This dwelling on Allah (ﷻ) should influence our behavior, and our behavior in turn should meet Allah's (ﷻ) approval and acceptance. Once Allah (ﷻ) is at the core of man's heart, He is also at the edges of man's horizon. Once Allah (ﷻ) fills man's heart, He also fills man's world. And when Allah (ﷻ) commands the impulse and urges of internal man He also commands the thrust and drives of external man.

“And be grateful to Me, and deny Me not.” How are we to be grateful to Allah (ﷻ) who has given us a direction in life, a leading role, and a central Ka'bah? How can we thank Allah (ﷻ) for blessing us with a position of *khilāfah* and to be the inheritors of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ)? First, we acknowledge Allah's (ﷻ) privilege and preference. Then we are bashful and fearful of disobeying Him. Our gratitude moves from being a feeling, to becoming a character, to advancing a model of social and peaceful existence.

Then Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And deny Me not.”** When a person denies Allah (ﷻ) he attempts to expel Him from his head and mind and also from his bosom and heart. But Allah's (ﷻ) reality is so profound, so basic, and so overwhelming that this attempted attack on the Glory and Majesty of Allah (ﷻ) by humans is no more than a veneer of error and arrogance, which Allah (ﷻ) refers to as *kufir*. No one can substantially and protractingly deny Allah (ﷻ). Individuals may hold on to an erroneous belief that “God does not exist,” and governments and intellectuals may campaign to persuade people that “God” is an idea whose time has long lapsed; but none of this systemic denial of Allah (ﷻ) can have any lasting effect.

No atheists, from the ancient Greek philosopher Xenophanes (570–480BCE) to the contemporary Soviet and Chinese-patronized movements, have had the quality of continuity.²⁷ They all died out: mentally, historically, practically, and strategically. As we have said earlier, *kufir* is more than denying God as a distant divinity. The core concern of these *kāfir*s is to deny the various qualities and attributes of God that are the manifestations of His power.

But it would be offensive to broadly brush Europe as a continent throwing up atheists from time to time. The history of Europe and its peoples is more complex than simply constituting varieties of faithlessness. There were and there are European ideas that speak out against atheism and the denial of God, even though they were concerned more with a theoretical, rather than a practical God. The range and nature of atheism in human history and experience is worth looking at before we move on.

Plato, in his *Laws*, prescribed the death penalty for certain kinds of atheists on the grounds that their views undermined both morality and law.²⁸ Even John Locke, the great European advocate of religious tolerance, exempted atheists from the application of the principles he was advocating on the grounds that, as he put it, "Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society can have no hold upon an atheist."²⁹ Atheism, he argued, not only being not a religion but also a philosophy that undermines all religion, could not come under the privilege of toleration that was rightly claimed by all bona fide religions.

In England until the Evidence Amendment Act of 1869,³⁰ atheists, whose word was believed to be untrustworthy, could not give evidence in English courts of law, because they were unable, as atheists, to take an oath administered in theistic language. Further, until well into the 20th European century, law courts in England were reluctant to give custody of children to professed atheists. The poet Shelley, for instance, who was not in fact an atheist but had been sent down from Oxford in 1810 for writing the pamphlet *On the Necessity of Atheism*, was legally deprived of the custody of his children on the grounds that he might inculcate them with atheistic views. The same transpired with Annie Besant half a century later.³¹ This early European perception of atheists has subsequently been replaced by accommodation if not honor for atheists. Although in some parts of Western societies the public profession of atheism may still not be socially acceptable, atheists in the Anglo-American sphere have today, by and large, the same rights, privileges and opportunities as other members of society (with the possible exception of Muslims). The term *atheism*, however, still

retains negative connotations in some conservative quarters that lead many who are, in fact, atheists to describe themselves by the slightly less offensive term *agnostic*.

The Indian religious tradition, for example the Advaita Vedanta philosophy,³² together with the religions of Buddhism and Jainism,³³ have all denied, or at least been agnostic toward, the existence of God, but strangely have not been regarded as any the less “religious” for that denial. According to this practice, religion is wider than theism. However, within the Western tradition, absolute atheism has, overall, been linked to the rejection of religion altogether. Such rejection has usually been based on a philosophical naturalism which denies the existence of any reality other than that which is accessible through sensory experience. Further, from the 18th century onwards, the difficulty of reconciling belief in a God who is both good and omnipotent with the evil that is found in the world appears to have led many more people to reject belief in God than would appear to have been the case in earlier ages. Even so, shades of this kind of rejection of the Divine Being manifested much earlier in India, during the 6th century BCE, when the Jains made use of the argument from evil in their critique of theism.³⁴

Atheism is found in almost all cultures of the world except in the Muslim sphere. Its earliest recorded appearance in secular history is in India about the 6th century BCE, where there rose a materialistic and hedonistic school of thought known as Lokayata or Carvaka.³⁵ The Lokayata outlook on the world was similar to that of the philosophers Democritus and Epicurus in ancient Greece.³⁶ This view finds poetic expression in the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius.³⁷ And most of the characteristics of later forms of atheism in both the Indian and Western traditions can be found in these two ancient approaches to the world, in that both have a materialistic ontology, an empirical epistemology, and a hedonistic ethic, all of which are features of atheism. However, while Epicurus advocated a withdrawal from the world of affairs and the cultivation of private friendship, Lokayata by contrast sought to divert man’s attention away from a religious “other world” toward a proper concern with this, the only world that they believed there to be.

A vigorous “naturalistic” (and atheistic) tradition can be found not only in India and ancient Greece but also in ancient China, where the most famous “naturalist,” Wang Ch’ung, expressed views similar to those found in Lokayata and Epicurianism.³⁸

The 16th-century English thinker Thomas Hobbes, who is often regarded as an atheist and was regarded as such by many of his contemporaries, was, on his own admission, not an atheist but a Deist.³⁹ Deism holds that God was necessary to account for there being a world, but that, having created the world, He took no further part in its affairs. The first avowed atheist of modern times was the French materialist philosopher Baron d’Holbach (1723–1789), the second volume of whose book, *The System of Nature*, published in 1754, contained a vigorous defense of atheism.⁴⁰ From the 18th century onwards an increasing number of thinkers advocated atheism and the rejection of all religion, the best-known of whom were Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre. As all of these thinkers regarded the matter of Godliness and atheism to be settled in favor of atheism in the 18th century, none of them felt the need to substantively argue the case for atheism; all, however, felt the need to explain the origin of the idea of God and the role which theistic religion had played in human societies.

This they did by drawing on Ludwig Feuerbach’s suggestion that God was a “projection” of certain aspects of human nature.⁴¹ Thus for Marx religion was “the fantastic realization of the human essence in a world where the human essence has no true reality,” a fantasy of alienated man that was destined to disappear when a society in which men and women were no longer alienated had been brought into being.⁴² Sigmund Freud saw belief in God as a projection of the need that he believed men and women have for a “father figure” to shield them from the terrible realities of life in the world.⁴³ The most profound discussion of theism (Godliness) in the 19th century, however, is found in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche.⁴⁴ He claimed that what he dramatically called “the death of God” (*nastaghfir-allāh*) was fraught with the most serious consequences for the survival of that culture — consequences he believed his contemporaries were oblivious of. The foundations of

Western civilization having crumbled, the “philosophers of the future,” said Nietzsche, must, as a matter of urgency, address the problem of how to rebuild Western culture on a non-Godly basis. For Nietzsche the controversy surrounding divinity was essentially about the creation of values and a meaningful life in a godless world. This question was also one of the main preoccupations of atheistic existentialist philosophy as popularized by Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.⁴⁵ The consequences of trying to live with an atheistic outlook on life were also explored by the Russian novelist Dostoyevsky in his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, which was intended to be the first part of a larger, but never completed, work entitled *The Atheist*.⁴⁶

To date, the most concerted attempt to establish a totally atheistic way of living in the world was that of Soviet *scientific atheism*.⁴⁷ This enterprise, proclaimed by decrees of the USSR Supreme Soviet in 1953 to be an integral part of Marxist-Leninist ideology, sought to replace religion, at all levels of Soviet society, with a “positive and constructive” atheistic outlook on life. The mention of this ill-fated experiment raises yet again in the Western tradition what is, perhaps, the major leitmotif of the atheism debate at the present time: the question of the social and cultural consequences of atheism. This in turn raises the further question of how, in what is perceived by many to be a post-theistic (if not, as yet, a post-religious) society, it is possible to establish society on other and more secure foundations than atheism. The civil religion debate, initiated by Robert Bellah and other American sociologists worried about the future development of American society, is indicative of the fear that many people in Western society still have: that unless society is founded on theistic or, at the very least, religious foundations, social order, and with it a meaningful way of life, will collapse.⁴⁸ Contemporary atheism is in retreat because the underlying fear is real and unavoidable. A glimpse of this plight is reflected in Allan Bloom’s comments on atheism and culture in the third part of his book *The Closing of the American Mind*.⁴⁹

After this diversion into the Western or European propositions about theoretical and mental arguments for and against the

existence of God, we appreciate even more why Allah (ﷻ) has assigned the world a *qiblah* that is designated by Him to be a guidance for humanity. It is only the people of this *qiblah* who have never fostered ideas of atheism or any denial of His presence in human existence, motivation and action. God forbid that Muslims should one day abandon Him and be misled by the likes of the atheist philosophers and thinkers!

Among the prominent advocates of atheism, many are Yahūd: Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and others who will be cited at appropriate places in the development of the meanings of this practical divine Writ. These Yahūd in the sequence of these *āyāt* are anxious to have Muslims become *kāfirs*. Imagine how happy Yahūd would be if there was somehow a mass conversion of Muslims into *kufr*. The objective of these Yahūdīs is to deprive Muslims of their divine commitment, their Godly attachment, and their heavenly goal. This Allah-to-man and man-to-Allah relationship is the most precious connection there is; and no amount of philosophical babble is going to convince the earnest and Allah-aware Muslim individual or society otherwise. It is the acknowledgment of this very fact that gives the Muslims their mission, strategy and destiny. The facts speak for themselves: can anyone point to Muslim philosophers who championed atheism, or Muslim thinkers who wrote books on atheism? The answer is obvious: Muslims do not have their equivalents of Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and their antecedents.

Muslims never had and never will have, *inshā'allāh*, the equivalent of a Soviet Union and Eastern Europe where the denial of God was a privilege, a means for promotion, and a status of prudence and power. Only in a few isolated cases, such as Albania and South Yemen, have regimes even attempted to impose such an official denial of Allah (ﷻ) on a Muslim people.⁵⁰ From the foundational influence of false atheistic philosophers and thinkers, their erroneous notions and ideas, and the operational kinetics of corrupt and self-serving power structures, the in vogue political and ideological systems, which have now brought the world and its people to the tipping point, were fashioned. If we thanked Allah (ﷻ) day

and night for protecting us from this evil, we would never be able to thank him sufficiently.

We have no evil empire in our Islamic hemisphere, but the West carries the dubious distinction of having its own evil empire(s). What used to be the political and ideological representative of official atheism, Russia, was in debt to the tune of \$155 billion in 1995, while the personal fortunes of a handful of unofficial oligarchs and strongmen ranged into the scores of billions.⁵¹ Its chief historical rival and the home of laissez-faire capitalism, the United States, after gloating over the break-up of the communist Soviet Union in 1989 and the superiority of its own economic, political, and social culture, could not overcome its own imperial hubris when it fell to its knees, just 20 years later, with simultaneous engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. At the end of the George W. Bush presidency in 2008, America, itself no stranger to atheistic experimentation in markets and foreign entanglements, was according to informed analysts in debt for some \$45 trillion.⁵² Sub-prime mortgages repackaged as investment opportunities in hedge funds and derivatives coupled with greed on Wall Street and war-profiteering by the military-industrial-congressional complex has driven unrivaled American power into an economic black hole — not to mention all the servile hangers-on from the UK to China to the “oil-rich” Gulf. These are the swings of *kufri* from “superpower” to super-pauper.

It would also be worthwhile to consider whether their fallacies about their own religious convictions, particularly Judaism and Christianity, contributed to a mental and philosophical reaction that was expressed in their “theoretical” denial of God, and in particular His authority, laws and power. When dedicated Muslims read these *āyāt*, they should have a historical as well as contemporary sense of these nations and peoples who declared God a fiction, and embarked on their historical ungratefulness and contemporary ingratitude, which gives them the living image of arrogance and selfish “imperialism.”

When committed Muslims were behaviorally thankful to Allah (ﷻ), when pledged Muslims were practically appreciative of

Allah (ﷻ), and when engaged Muslims were ideologically obliged by Allah (ﷻ), they set an example for the world. This much is asserted with neither haughtiness nor vainglory; it is stated for the record because Muslims should be innocently proud of being honored and privileged by Allah (ﷻ) as they offer their perceptiveness, admiration and thanks to Allah (ﷻ), the Highest and Most Glorious. But today when Muslims offer heartfelt gratitude to worldly powers, while offering only lip-service to Allah (ﷻ), the Provident and the Provider, they find themselves in the position of being proud to mimic such God-deniers as Marx, Freud and Nietzsche. And while recent generations of “intellectual” Muslims were busy admiring the *kāfirs*, Allah (ﷻ) was castigating this aping of decadent atheists. How true is Allah’s (ﷻ) *āyah*,

And [remember the time] when your Sustainer authorized [the following], “If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more and more; but if you are ungrateful, verily, My chastisement will be severe indeed!” (14:7).

The Relationship between *Ṣabr* and *Ṣalāh*

- (2:153) O You who are committed to Allah! Seek aid in steadfast patience and *ṣalāh*; for behold, Allah is with those who are patient in adversity.
- (2:154) And say not of those who are slain in Allah’s cause, “They are dead;” nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not.
- (2:155) And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labor’s] fruits. But give glad tidings to those who are patient in adversity,
- (2:156) Who, when calamity befalls them, say, “Verily, to Allah we belong and verily, to Him we shall return.”

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ
﴿١٥٣﴾ وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَن يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمُوتٌ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَٰكِن
لَّا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ
مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا
أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

- (2:157) It is they upon whom their Sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are guided (al-Baqarah:153–157).

Allah (ﷻ) recommends, or rather orders, us who are faithfully committed to Him, to have patience sustained by an intimate connection (*ṣalāh*) with Him as an aid for whatever disputes and challenges come our way. It is notable that these *āyāt* come directly after the previous 110 *āyāt* that dwell on the mischievous and malicious character of Banū Isrā'īl. A powerful call to be calm and steady, these *āyāt* build and reinforce the *ṣalāh* relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Some classical *mufasssirs* say these *āyāt* encourage Muslims to be patient with all deeds that are required for salvation. But since everything a Muslim does is channeled into his record for the Day of Accountability, the classical *tafsīr* is so general that it becomes almost purposeless.

Allah (ﷻ) with His all-encompassing knowledge is cognizant of the fact that, during hard times, Muslims will need to persist, persevere and hold on. He knows that the accumulation of mental

and moral fortitude during these tough times will be called upon to countervail the persistent calumnies and forces leveled against the committed Muslims as they combat the entrenched positions of generational vested interests,

You shall most certainly be tried in your possessions and in your persons; and indeed you shall hear many hurtful things from those to whom revelation was granted before your time, as well as from those who have come to ascribe divinity/authority to other beings beside Allah. But if you remain patient in adversity and conscious of Him — this, indeed, is a seminal accomplishment (3:186).

The scope of this theatre of operations is one in which the Ummah and the ideological will of the Muslims are strained, as when the Yahūd tried first to mock the Muslims' *qiblah*, then to discredit the leadership of Muhammad (ﷺ), and then to subvert the whole message of the Qur'an and Islam. Within the unsettling context of the Prophet's (ﷺ) establishment of the first Islamic state instrument — while simultaneously at war on the outside with Makkah and on the inside with the Yahūd and *munāfiqs* — this *āyah* was revealed to advise the Muslims to draw on the fortitude and strength of mind that enables one to endure adversity with courage.

The Muslims gained their independent character after they gained their independent *qiblah*. During the last 14 centuries it has become clear — with the advantage of hindsight — that the more the *qiblah* was ritualized the more the Muslims became dependent on their *kāfir* enemies. And now, in the first half of the 15th Islamic century, the *qiblah*, thanks to the Saudi stranglehold on Makkah, has become thoroughly detached from any ideological meaning, and thus the corresponding condition of the Ummah has become thoroughly attached to *kāfir* and secular forces. This is the Muslims' fall from Allah's (ﷻ) grace: from having one self-governing and autonomous *qiblah* concept coupled with a distinguished and unique leadership to having the multiple *qiblahs* (Washington,

London, Paris, etc.) notoriously peculiar to a slave-and-master relationship. Muslims, becoming more and more the mental and spiritual slaves of every *kāfir* fashion and feature, are increasingly indistinguishable in style and status from the *kāfirs* and secularists around them. The slave mentality runs so deep that some of these Muslims' innermost wish is to have their flesh and face in the image of their European masters.

Allah (ﷻ) knows that a free Ummah will be put to the test and that the test will be a difficult one. True to Allah's (ﷻ) words, it is a difficult test when the “custodians of Makkah and Madinah” are the pacesetters who have their religious hierarchy spread around the world, popping up in every other *masjid* and Islamic center. Deep down inside, these so-called custodians are convinced that the Afro-Asian mass of people are contemptible while the Euro-American people are supreme. *Ṣabr* and *ṣalāh* are required in our time and age not only to put up with the external challenges to our *qiblah* and its self-governing and self-legislating character, but also to bear the misunderstandings and misinformation promoted by “well-meaning” Muslims whose red and green lights are in Riyadh and Jeddah. The words of Allah (ﷻ) are telling us to get ready. If we are to uphold the self-ruling and self-directing responsibilities bestowed on us by Him, if we are to designate Makkah as our genuine *qiblah* as He outlines in the preceding *āyāt*, then we will have to work for that objective and be firm enough to make it happen.

Once this becomes our goal, we will need the advice in this *āyah*. Get ready: there will be *shahīds* (martyrs) along the way; there will be a scarcity of income, companions and returns. All this will be accompanied by fear and maybe famine. But what may be perceived here as adversity comes with an uncompromising attitude and strategy to have Allah's (ﷻ) law and order both in soul and in society. To build a social reality where the standards of Allah (ﷻ) become the norm of the human world will not be an easy task. There are governments and national interests that will go nuclear and ballistic rather than see divine standards of justice anchored into the human condition. What is in this for us? It is Allah's (ﷻ) satisfaction, atonement and expiation; His mercy, grace and bless-

ings; and His steering, guidance and counsel. If we gain these we have gained it all; but if we lose them we have nothing even if we have all the wealth, resources, and power in this world.

O you who are faithfully committed! Seek aid in steadfast patience and *ṣalāh*; indeed, Allah is with those who are patient in adversity (2:153).

The word *ṣabr* (patience/forbearance) and its derivatives occur some 103 times in the Qur'an. Allah (ﷻ) knows the circumstances and considerations that will require us, the vigilant Muslims, to be self-controlled and uncomplaining while we struggle and suffer for His higher purpose. At times we will feel torn between our family obligations and our *da'wah* demands; at other times we will be frustrated because our hopes are high and our accomplishments low; and at other times we will feel "defeated" because it seems that time is not on our side. All this requires a determination of steel, steady nerves and undivided concentration on Allah (ﷻ). That is why Allah (ﷻ) has these words for us, "O you who are dependably committed! Seek aid in composed patience and *ṣalāh*..."

We need patience to obey Allah (ﷻ) if we are to raise the standards of this Qur'an in this world. We need composure and self-control to revitalize the *qiblah* and regain our unparalleled and unequalled collective personality and character. We need poise and self-command to become the "model" human beings we claim to be. We need coolness and calmness, as there are provocateurs awaiting every opportunity to draw us into premature and irrational reactions. We need this *ṣabr* when our own *nafs* tells us that we "have gone too far," "no one cares," and "the cost-benefit analysis" is not in our favor. We need *ṣabr* when the material mind figures that we have reached a point of "diminishing returns," and the "losses outweigh the gains." We need *ṣabr* when it seems that everyone is telling us "there is no light at the end of the tunnel." These inner feelings that creep into our relationship with Allah (ﷻ) are sometimes more dangerous than bullets, bombs, missiles, and military machines.

After a long series of setbacks, and what seem to be one defeat after another, it is sometimes easier to say, “Well, we did our best but it just did not work out; we will withdraw ‘underground’ and wait for the right circumstances.” Many Islamic organizations and parties are afraid to fully commit themselves precisely because of this phase, which will test everyone to the last iota of patience and endurance. It is here that Allah (ﷻ) combines *ṣabr* with *ṣalāh*. Not only are we to be willing and forbearing, but we are also to be connecting with Allah (ﷻ) for care, comfort, compassion, and motivation: *ṣalāh*. Here we can draw on Allah’s (ﷻ) presence night and day, inside ourselves and inside our societies. This combination of *ṣabr* and *ṣalāh* recharges the mind, revitalizes the will and relaxes the nerves. In other words, it relieves the pressure. And in the middle of the persistent “all the odds are against us” aura, we feel confident, serene, assiduous and indefatigable, **“Indeed, Allah is with those who are patient [when the odds are against them].”**

We earthly weaklings (in our state of Islam), when we run out of energy, power and strength, are in need of this power. *Ṣabr* and *ṣalāh* are the channels Allah (ﷻ) has offered us to recharge ourselves with His aid and comfort. The military might of the Muslims bears no comparison with that of the *kāfirs*. In terms of physical and material power, Muslims are generations and centuries behind. Parity is not even an option. In this scenario, what are we to do? The easy and convenient answer is to withdraw and pray that maybe things will change. The harder and more demanding option is to press ahead with our duty to establish a sovereign and independent Ummah that has a genuine *qiblaḥ* — and in the process endure what comes our way by maintaining a close-knit and intimate relationship with Allah (ﷻ). The latter is the course of action outlined in the *āyāt* above. The lusts in our *nafs* (on the inside) and the bursts of bombs in our lands (on the outside) would be enough to destroy our whole mission if it were not for progressive *ṣabr* and constructive *ṣalāh*.

How many times have we witnessed a “burned out” Muslim? This Muslim had a correct idea more or less — about his Islamic responsibilities, the Islamic order, and the Islamic gestalt. He

embarked on his vision by joining an Islamic movement (party, organization, group, etc.), but after a period of time, sometimes long, sometimes short, this type of person is so disappointed and fed-up that he decides to step back from the struggle and wait instead for a miracle, be it the coming of al-Mahdī, the second coming of ‘Īsá (ﷺ), or some other extraordinary event. Even contemporary Islamic political orders and movements show symptoms of “withdrawal” when the going gets tough. This can be seen in some Iranians’ responses to the Iran/Iraq war during the 1980s, and the settling into the status quo by major Islamic parties, for example the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, and SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) and the Da‘waḥ parties in Iraq as the Americans began to draw down their forces in 2009.⁵³

When lives are on the line, when families lose loved ones, when society sees no way out, at such moments, it is Allah (ﷻ) who is saying, “Here I am, call upon me, communicate with Me, and come to Me.” In one such *āyah*, Allah (ﷻ) says,

And if My conforming subjects ask you about Me — behold, I am near. I respond to the call of him who calls, whenever he calls unto Me; let them, then, respond to Me, and commit securely to Me, so that they might follow the right way (2:186).

At strenuous times like this, the Prophet (ﷺ) would say to Bilāl, “*Ariḥnā bihā, yā Bilāl: Relieve us with it [the call to ṣalāḥ], O Bilāl.*”⁵⁴ It is reported that whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) felt distressed or emotionally strained, he would go to *ṣalāḥ*;⁵⁵ hard times are an invitation to Allah (ﷻ) and *ṣalāḥ*.

In the middle of all these demanding tasks and exhausting efforts, we should not lose sight of the fact that social activity remains parallel to spiritual solidarity; that social activity contributes to spiritual vitality. A high spirit is sustained by Allah (ﷻ) and Allah (ﷻ) alone. When Allah (ﷻ) places a global responsibility on the shoulders of onward-looking Muslims, He knows they will not only need Him, but they will desperately need Him. In

other *āyāt* of the serene Scripture, Allah (ﷻ) instructs His revered Prophet (ﷺ) on how to place himself at an advantageous access to Allah (ﷻ),

O you enwrapped one [nestled and snuggled in the physical disconnection of night]. Keep awake [in *ṣalāh*] at night, all but a small part of one-half thereof — or make it a little less than that, or add to it [at will]; and [during that time] recite the Qur’an calmly and distinctly, with your mind attuned to its meaning. Behold, we shall lay on you a weighty statement... (73:1–5).

There is a definite correlation between the Prophet’s (ﷺ) deliberate sacrifice of staying awake during the night and the sacrifices required to endure the human-imposed suffering during the day. Communication and communion with Allah (ﷻ) during the night are necessary for confrontation during the day. The night-channel to Allah (ﷻ) is a method for engaging the will of Allah (ﷻ) and of deterring hostile aggression during the day. At this point Allah (ﷻ) says, “**Certainly, Allah is with those who persevere.**” He is with them, supporting them, aiding them, helping them, boosting them, and accompanying them. They are not left to the weakness of their limited selves, the restrictions of their human capacity, and the calculations of their worldly confines. Allah (ﷻ) reinforces and replenishes the spirits and the supplies of those who are in His presence.

The hadiths about *ṣabr* are numerous. For example, Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt, a companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) who was dragged on burning embers in Makkah, narrated the following,

As the Prophet (ﷺ) was leaning on a garment in the shades of the Ka’bah we complained to him, saying, “Why don’t you ask [Allah] to support us? Why don’t you appeal [to Allah] for us?” He replied, “In times past, a man would be put in a hole that was dug for him. Then a saw would be placed on his head whereby it would be cut into two halves. He then would be

combed with iron combs through flesh and bones. All that would not cause him to renounce his dīn... By Allah, He will finalize this affair [Islam] so that it will be possible for a traveller to go from Ṣana‘ā’ to Ḥaḍramawt with nothing to fear except Allah and a wolf preying on sheep. But you are in a hurry.”⁵⁶

Ibn Mas‘ūd narrates the following,

It is as if I were seeing Allah’s Apostle (ﷺ) in the image of another Prophet being beaten by his people and bleeding. He is wiping the blood off his face and saying, “O Allah! Forgive my people. They do not know [what they are doing].”⁵⁷

Yaḥyá ibn Waththāb relates from a senior of the Apostle’s (ﷺ) companions that the Apostle (ﷺ) said,

A Muslim who interacts with people and is patient with their belligerency is better than one who does not interact with people and thus does not have patience with such belligerency.”⁵⁸

What started as a Yahūdī campaign to delegitimize the *qiblah* and thence discredit the Prophet (ﷺ), turned, with the enduring patience of the Muslims, into an instrument that backfired on Yahūd, not only exposing them but also exposing the teetering Muslims who were misled by the Yahūdī campaign. If Muslims have their eyes fixed on this strategic and activist patience, then they will come to realize that lesser issues are included in this far-reaching perseverance of theirs. A telling personality difference between a committed Muslim and a hard core *kāfir* is the Muslim’s conviction that Allah’s (ﷻ) Will shall manifest itself in due time, sooner or later, as long as the involved Muslim does not disengage from his *jihādī* struggle. While the *kāfir* who wants immediate gratification begins to witness the erosion of his world vision and paradigm, the Muslim’s strategy of active *ṣabr* begins to turn the tide. Thus the *kāfir*, confounded as he is with rapidly diminishing nerve power and drained of any will to do anything about it, is constrained to simply

watch as the Islamic reality comes into being by Allah’s (ﷻ) Will and by the Muslims’ enduring fortitude. Patience is one of those characteristics that is strengthened by experience and endurance. It takes time and effort.

The sense of urgency and temperament that man gains through a deep and sustained relationship with Allah (ﷻ) — formally defined as *ṣalāh* — over the seasonal times and seasoned years is the subject of the following *āyah*,

Verily, man is born with a restless disposition. [As a rule,] whenever misfortune touches him, he is filled with self-pity; and whenever good fortune comes to him, he selfishly withholds it [from others]. Not so, however, for those who consciously turn to Allah in *ṣalāh*, [and] who incessantly persevere in their *ṣalāh*” (70:19–23).

These *āyāt* are in fact outlining and defining a new character, not that of the automatic and habitual performer of *ṣalāh*. The average *muṣallī* (a person who offers *ṣalāh*) displays no relationship between “prayer and patience.” He goes through a routine of motions: up and down, kneeling and prostrating, repeating verses and supplication, but at the end it is just a show. Some may even do it to curry favor with someone else: a boss, a superior or an elder. Some may do it for a reputation of piety because that is a source of status in society. Instead of this *ṣalāh* being a serious and sincere effort to have Allah (ﷻ) fill the mind, the heart, and the human senses, it is subverted into an inherited custom that has lost its original meaning, or it is reduced to a social ritual that no longer assimilates divine help into human conduct. It is precisely because of this antiquating of *ṣalāh* that we, the contemporary Muslims, are no longer able to view it as a means to educate peoples and nations. *Ṣalāh*, through the declining years and faltering generations, has become individualized.

Remember, *ṣalāh* here means an integrative drill, a collective effort, and a congregational drive: **“You who are faithfully committed! Seek aid in patience and *ṣalāh*.”** And when was this *āyah*

revealed? It was revealed when Muslims were building their independent Ummah, independent character, and independent *qiblah*. Independence here does not mean isolationist, nor does it mean exclusivist; it means integrative and unifying of the human condition and destiny. It is because of this integrative and consolidative nature of Islam that Muslims are prompted to have a strategic endurance and long-term perseverance. Not many individuals are able to cultivate this character; and for this reason, a critical quality of leadership, acquired by integrating *ṣabr* and *ṣalāh*, has remained elusive for most “practicing” Muslims.

Far away from the physical mechanics of prayers lies the core feature of *ṣalāh*, **“And seek aid in steadfast patience and *ṣalāh*; and this, indeed, is a hard thing for all but the humble in spirit” (2:45)**. If *ṣalāh* were the outward kneeling and prostrating, which is commonplace nowadays, the wording of the Qur’an would have been something like “and this, indeed, is a hard thing for all but the strong in physique.” Another *āyah* reads,

Convey [to others] whatever of this divine Writ has been revealed to you, and have *ṣalāh* as the [spiritual and social] standard; for, behold, *ṣalāh* restrains [man] from loathsome deeds and from all that runs counter to reason; and the minding [and feeling] of Allah is indeed the greatest [good]. And Allah knows all that you do (29:45).

What a fantastic *āyah*! *Ṣalāh* restrains man from *fāḥishah* and *munkar* (immorality and illegality). But how many people do you know who offer their prayers and yet wallow in immorality and thrive on illegality? The most obviously pertinent examples are the officials on top of every secular system in the Muslim world. Not only are they personally corrupt as far as morality is concerned, and not only do they personally transact by illegitimate means, they are in charge of the whole value-system that gives “respectability” to immorality and the entire official system that gives *kufṛ* its “legality.”

Take one statement in *ṣalāh*; the first thing a *muṣallī* says is *Allāhu akbar*. And then this statement is repeated five times in every *rak'ah*. In the *fard* (mandatory) *ṣalāhs* during one day (*Fajr* through '*Ishā'*'), there are 17 *rak'ahs*. All in all, a *muṣallī* says *Allāhu akbar* at least 90 times a day. *Allāhu akbar* means “Allah is greater.” If he truly means what he says, a Muslim continues to repeat *Allāhu akbar* until there is nothing more important, more significant, more interesting, more available, more abundant, more amplified, more supreme, more powerful, in his life than Allah (ﷻ). This one statement with its many repetitions during all the days and years is enough to acknowledge and confess to Allah's (ﷻ) superiority, supremacy, and singularity.

For example, if King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, whose personal wealth was estimated to be some \$20 billion near the end of his life, had prayed every day in his adult life (and there is no doubt he had been praying every day of his adult life as it is his custom and tradition to do so), this means he would have been praying roughly since 1934. Thus for each of these 65 years he prayed, King Fahd would have said *Allāhu akbar* at least 32,850 times; therefore over 65 years, he must have said *Allāhu akbar* at least 2,135,250 times. With the rigid traditions of praying the *sunnah*, *nawāfil*, *tarāwīḥ*, etc., it can be further assumed that “his majesty” and “highness” King Fahd had recited *Allāhu akbar* at least another one million times on top of that.

But did he mean what he said in his prayers? In August 1981, King Fahd presented to the Arab League a Middle East peace plan that proposed a “peaceful coexistence” of all states in the region, including Zionist Israel. Is this “peace plan” with the enemies of Allah (ﷻ) consistent with the words *Allāhu akbar* that this king had repeated around three million times in his lifetime? This Fahd initiative was adopted by other Muslim rulers (kings and presidents who may not have repeated the words *Allāhu akbar* as many times as Fahd) in Fez, Morocco, in September 1982.⁵⁹

In keeping with his evident disbelief in *Allāhu akbar*, which is just one phrase of *ṣalāh*, Fahd and the rest of the Muslim world's treacherous “rulers” later called on the United States and other

kāfir forces to protect his majesty's Saudi establishment after another Muslim-for-the-camera, Saddam Hussein, threatened their positions with his invasion of Kuwait. The huge amounts paid by Riyadh's effigy-Muslims in the conduct of the Second Gulf War, the military and political contracts that are still being signed in the hundreds of millions and billions of dollars, and the sharply reduced prices of oil placed Fahd, his advisers, and his successors in an awkward position: their *ṣalāh* did not hinder *fāhishah* and *munkar*; if anything, it appeared to aid and abet them.⁶⁰

Such corruption and repression by lip-service Muslims serves the rest of the Ummah's determination to "seek aid in patience and *ṣalāh*." No longer will histrionics, such as the August 1993 appointment of a nominated 60-member consultative council, fool the Muslims who are drawing power from Allah (ﷻ) to topple official immorality and sinful governments.⁶¹

What else do we want? What else can we ask for? Allah (ﷻ) is with us if and when we are patient in adversity. Allah (ﷻ) is near us in calamities and crises. He is accessible in challenges and catastrophes. He is approachable in difficulties and disasters. Allah (ﷻ) is to be found in emergencies and tragedies. He provides Himself in want and need. He offers us His bearing in hardships and ordeals. Nothing can be done with a long-range plan without patience and perseverance. How true are these words today when the mainstream media tells the committed Muslims that there is no use in defying the "world order."

In effect, what they are saying is, "Why are you Muslims trying, in vain, to establish an Islamic order? The communists, the Soviets, and the socialists tried the same thing, and they failed, and now they regret it. You Muslims will also fail and come to regret it." They tell us, "Muslim military operations in places like Southern Lebanon and Algeria are tantamount to suicidal operations and acts of desperation."⁶² These mouthpieces of *kufr* do not want the Muslims to see the overall picture, the wholesome jihad, and the complementary efforts that make up today's Islamic reality and tomorrow's consolidated Islamic order. This fragmentation of the current jihad of Muslims around the world is yet another form of

warfare that seeks to place us in proximity to the material and not the Almighty. This propaganda of the *kāfirs* and Yahūd is intended to convince us that their might cancels our right. And some Muslims will fall for this line because they are detached from *ṣabr* and *ṣalāh*. Yet here are Allah’s (ﷻ) measured words and wisdom,

And say not of those who are slain in Allah’s cause, “They are dead;” no, they are alive, but you perceive it not. And most certainly shall we try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of labor’s fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity, who, when calamity befalls them, say, “Verily, to Allah we belong and, verily, to Him shall we return” (2:154–156).

This is the crux of the matter: life and death, tears and sweat, blood and bloodshed. Yet, this is the path to Islamic self-determination. This is what it means to have the *qiblah* as center and the Ummah in unison. For this reason the Qur’an here is raising the Muslims’ spirits. Jihad itself needs the essential element of *ṣabr* and *ṣalāh*. Jihad may not be over in a few years; it certainly can be multi-generational. Our jihad with the Yahūd is certainly of the latter type. We have our ups and downs, our thrusts and counter-thrusts, our push and pull. Along the way we sustain casualties and sacrifices, pains and anguish. But sustaining all this is the Collector of *ṣabr* and the Liaison of *ṣalāh*.

“Say not of those who are killed in Allah’s way, ‘They are dead.’ Rather, they are alive. But you see it not.” In this path there will necessarily be combatants who will fight and die, who will go to war and pass on, and who will execute military operations and perish. All of this will be done for the higher purpose and concern of Allah (ﷻ). Some of these individuals will be dear and beloved ones, honored and privileged with *shahādah* (martyrdom). Most of the times those who go to front-line positions, the trenches, the foxholes, and undertake the special operations, are the cream of the Islamic rank and file. But often they do not return in

blood and flesh, in clothes and uniforms. These special souls and high spirits go to Allah (ﷻ), where they cannot be dead. How dare we refer to them as being dead, unless life is centered around this world and living is a property of this planet, and aliveness is limited to our senses? When Allah (ﷻ) bears witness that these subjects of His are alive, who are we to say they are “dead?” They certainly are alive, living, and spirited.

This may be one reason that *shahīds* (martyrs) are not to be given the funeral bath (*ghusl*) before burial; because they are alive. The word *funeral* does not apply to them. Nor are they to be shrouded; their shrouds are the clothes in which they passed on. The *ghusl* is to cleanse a corpse; but they are pure, cleansed by the manner of their passing.

And as they are alive, no one should feel sorry for them — no relative, no friend, and no dear one. Why would anyone want to cry for a *shahīd*? His quality of life is better than ours who are living in this world. Not only are they alive and well, they are also honored, respected, esteemed, and graced. They are rewarded munificently and generously. In this regard, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said,

The souls of the shahīds are in the craws of green birds roaming in Paradise as they please. Then they settle on lanterns attached to the throne. Your Sustainer looks at them and says, “What is it that you desire?” They say, “O our Sustainer! What else can we desire when You have given us what You have not given anyone of Your created beings?” Then He asks them once again. And when they realize that the question is a persistent one, they say, “We want You to return us back to the abode of dunyā [the world] so that we may fight for Your cause and die for You again.” Then the Lord says, “I have decreed that to it [the world] they will not return.”⁶³

Of course, “clinically” speaking these combatants are dead. But death cannot be limited to a human definition because Allah (ﷻ) has the final say on who is dead and who is alive. Superficially

and materialistically speaking, when we see a lifeless body (a corpse) we immediately assume the person belonging to that body is dead. But a closer look at this outward and cursory definition reveals other things. The first feature of life is vitality, growth and development. And the first feature of death is dormancy, obsolescence, and extinction.

But these who have given their physical lives for the cause of Allah (ﷻ) have in actual fact invigorated the *ḥaqq* (truth and reality). The concept and principle for which they gave their lives is raised by their blood and sacrifice. It grows and develops because they gave themselves for it. Even other committed Muslims are fostered and nourished by this *shahādah*. These *shahīds* remain a vital and a vigorous force in the course of life itself. Their life is no longer confined to the physical and organic structure with which they were identified; now their conviction endures in other expressions of life. So how can they be wasted or washed out, as the Western media decries about Muslim *shahīds* everywhere?

Then, beyond their living memory in the world, these honored personas are alive in the presence of Allah (ﷻ) or in His proximity and nearness. We will never have a sensory answer to these questions of “where, how, and why” because they go beyond the time and place restrictions we experience in our earthly lives. It is enough for us to have Allah (ﷻ) reveal this fact, **“Rather, they are alive, but you cannot sense it.”** Anas ibn Mālik narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

There is no one who enters paradise who wishes to return to the dunyā [worldly life] even if offered everything on earth, except the shahīd. He wishes to return to the world to die ten [more] times because of the honor [he experiences].⁶⁴

But who are these living *shahīds*? They are the ones who are killed for the cause and for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) — only for Him, and for no other purpose, advantage, or objective. It is all done for Allah (ﷻ) and the *ḥaqq* He sent down to us; for making it possible to have His heavenly program an earthly reality; and for the object

of implementing Allah's (ﷻ) decree. No other purpose, cause, goal, or banner will do. The Qur'an and the Hadith make it clear: the motivation, the goal, the destiny, and the ultimate in this affair has to be Allah (ﷻ), and none but Him. Abū Mūsā narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked to choose between a person who fights to show his courage, and another to show his zeal, and another to prove his worth, as to who of these would be for the cause and sake of Allah (ﷻ)? He said, "Whoever fights to have Allah's word supreme has fought for the cause and sake of Allah."⁶⁵

In another hadith, narrated by Abū Hurayrah, the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about a man who fights in a general mobilization but is motivated by the booties of the battle and the spoils of war. To this, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He shall not be rewarded." He was asked thrice, and thrice the answer was the same, "He shall not be rewarded."⁶⁶ Also narrated is the following,

Allah, Most High, has guaranteed anyone who departs for Allah's cause, motivated only by a jihad for the sake of Allah, a commitment to Allah, and a dedication to the Prophets...for him Allah will guarantee an entry into Paradise or a return to his home with all the rewards and payoffs of war. By He whose hands have the soul of Muhammad, no one shall suffer an injury on a battlefield except that he will be resurrected as he was on that day: the injury's blood is red but its scent is perfume. By He whose hands have the soul of Muhammad, had it not been a burden on the Muslims I would not have ever excluded myself from any military campaign for the cause of Allah. I find no disposition to burden the Muslims with such a behavior that some of them may find too demanding in following. By He whose hands have the soul of Muhammad, I wish to do my military duty and die for Allah's cause, do my military duty again and die for Allah's cause, and then again do my military duty and die for Allah's cause."⁶⁷

In line with the rest of the imperatives of the Islamic commitment to Allah (ﷻ), *shahādah* has nothing to do with distinctions of

culture and class. The human consciousness, imperfect as it is on its way to being recast into a mold suitable for Allah's (ﷻ) work, is still required to make the sacrifice, but it nonetheless contains to various degrees elements of ethnicity and nationalism. Can these be tolerated even as the combatant Muslim finds himself in the life and death position for Allah (ﷻ)? In this regard, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did not approve of a young man's boasting his Persian individuality during the course of jihad. It has been reported by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī 'Uqbaḥ who related the following from his father — a *mawlā* (sponsored immigrant) of Persian origin — who said,

*I served with the Prophet (ﷺ) in the battle of Uḥud. In the course of that battle I struck a mushrik. Then I said, "Take this; I am a Persian cub." Then the Prophet (ﷺ) turned to me and said, "Rather say, 'I am an Anṣārī cub.' A people's nephew is one of them, and a people's mawlā is one of them."*⁶⁸

On this occasion, the Prophet (ﷺ) condemned the display of a nationalistic character or an ethnic attribute, and instructed the Persian Muslim to present himself as a champion of the Prophet (ﷺ). This clearly indicates that the identity of a Muslim warrior should always be his ideological character, as a Muslim, since this is the only character that entitles him to *shahādah* and thus eternal life.

Trying Times Temper the Islamic Resolve

Then the Qur'anic *āyāt* prepare the committed Muslims for the conditions they can anticipate in their struggle. The *āyāt* also fine-tune the Islamic concepts of reality and the real world,

And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labor's] fruits. But give glad tidings to those who are patient in adversity, who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Verily, to Allah we belong, and verily to Him we shall return (2:155–156)

This *āyah* is a powerhouse of meanings and character definition. Allah (ﷻ) says He will put committed Muslims to test: not an undemanding test but one that requires patience and endurance. This is how an Islamic personality develops and reaches maturity. The Muslim collective presence has to be put under extreme pressure that is monitored by Allah (ﷻ). If Muslims want an Islamic self, an Islamic society, and an Islamic state, then they are not going to have them by wishful thinking, nor by scientific formulas, nor by cutting corners. They will only achieve Islamic self-determination by the kind of single-mindedness that withstands all opposition. The decision to go for an Islamic world order has to be founded on a purposefulness to embark on a course to Allah (ﷻ), which will take the Muslims through fear and apprehension, through limited resources and impoverishment, and through hunger and hardship. Islam is not cheap; it does not come easily. When it comes, it comes through sacrifices and when it goes, it goes through sacrifices. The more Muslims sacrifice their time and effort for Allah's (ﷻ) world order, the more this world order becomes dear to the Muslims and the more it becomes valuable to the non-Muslim population, once they see its practical benefits and unique contributions to human society.

Cheap ideologies and cheap beliefs have followers who are unable or unwilling to make sacrifices to nurture their ideologies and beliefs. A prime example is the Soviet socialist ideology, so pinchbeck that the whole Soviet system collapsed because of 15,000 casualties in its war in Afghanistan. Soviet officers were not convinced that the war they were fighting justified casualties, and Soviet soldiers were deserting or surrendering at any opportunity. By contrast, the Muslims in Afghanistan and in Chechnya were so charged by their orientation toward Allah (ﷻ) that the more they were tested, the more they appreciated Islam and the more they were grateful to Allah (ﷻ).⁶⁹

This courage and character superiority of the committed Muslims has a fringe benefit. There are people watching this duel between the Muslims and their "superior" adversaries, and when the Muslims emerge victorious the watchers will say, "There must

be something about these peoples' beliefs and their 'religion' that tips the balance their way." This international audience of spectators will begin to take a more serious look at Islam as the committed Muslims give lives and loved ones for the cause and the course to Allah (ﷻ). Those who yesterday were enemies of Islam will become neutral or sympathetic to this amazing phenomenon of Islamic poise and long-suffering. At this point in time, which may take decades or even generations to emerge, as long as the effort is sustained, multitudes of people will identify with Islam en masse and many of them will be so impressed that they themselves will become Muslims. Between the beginning of this eventful, life-sustaining and unwavering commitment, and the end result of resounding victory, when people identify with this new Islamic world order and seek to become its constituents and citizens, are fear, hunger, sacrifices, vilification, and hardship.

Allah (ﷻ) is preparing His cherished Muslims for hard times. A Muslim base has to be strengthened and fortified by the real challenges in life, and not by some yoga-like spiritual formula that promises self-satisfaction or "transformation." The weight of this *āyah*, which could mean famine, panic, poverty, depopulation, and agricultural disaster, is meant to have the Islamic determination survive even if the body does not, to have the Islamic will survive even if the individual does not, and to have the Islamic conclusion survive even if the details do not. The robust Islamic Ummah is destined to be molded by these challenges. Under these types of pressures, when the community of dedicated Muslims is focused on the will and power of Allah (ﷻ), the community will experience and learn things that would otherwise be inaccessible and unidentifiable. Values, concepts, and measurements by the Muslims of adversarial social and military forces are honed through the type of trying times that Allah (ﷻ) is describing in this *āyah*.

What counts most of all in these hard times is that Allah (ﷻ) is behind all this. He calculates, He plans, and He supervises the whole affair. When Muslims think they are powerless, they should know that theirs is Allah's (ﷻ) power; when Muslims feel they are "inferior" to their enemies, they should know that their Supporter

is superior to all. It is this acknowledgment that will eventually carry the day,

...And confer to those who are patient the good news. Those who once they are afflicted with catastrophe say, “Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we are returning” (2:155–156).

Compare how individuals who are detached from Allah (ﷻ) react with the way Allah’s (ﷻ) men-on-earth react when “natural catastrophes” occur. Take famine as an example. Famine is seldom a sudden disaster. It is a long and drawn-out process, passing through several stages. The rains fail (is this not planned by Allah (ﷻ)?); vegetation withers for lack of water (is this not linked with man’s social behavior?); food supplies gradually dwindle (is there a correlation between social behavior and natural occurrences, or between society’s action and nature’s reaction?); shortage becomes scarcity and eventually complete dearth. It may be many months or years before this final, dreaded stage is reached. Drought is still the main cause of famine. Some famines have followed calamitous floods. There have been cases of a new disease attacking the main food crop of a people, as in the terrible potato famine of Ireland.⁷⁰ Armies have in many cases brought famine in their wake, by killing the men who should be working the land or by deliberately laying waste the land itself.

Men (Muslim and non-Muslim) experience disasters such as earthquakes and floods that are attributed to the natural environment; and man experiences war and persecution as a direct function of man’s own decisions and behavior. Since 1900, earthquakes alone have killed about 1.5 million people around the world. From the Biblical Flood to the recurring devastation of what is now Bangladesh; and from the recorded catastrophes that destroyed Thera (470BCE) and Pompeii (79CE) to the most recent volcanic eruptions in Iceland and tsunamis in Indonesia runs a thread of ruin and destruction.⁷¹ Although modern medicine has largely overcome the ancient killers of cholera, bubonic plague, pandemic influenza,

and smallpox, they are only subdued, not vanquished. Widespread malnutrition or civil war can easily provide the conditions for their return. The cholera epidemic exacerbated by the economic and political meltdown in modern Zimbabwe is an example.⁷²

Man's inventive ambition, particularly in the area of transport, has often outstripped his technical expertise. Bridges collapse, "unsinkable" ships sink, giant dirigibles explode, and aircraft collide. From economic to scientific disasters there is an area that man has failed to concentrate on: the link between man's ideology and belief on one side and man's environment and habitat on the other. The *āyah* above is telling the determined Muslims that their attachment to Allah (ﷻ) will be strained by the adverse effects of their environment and habitat. The former shall survive and the social conditions around will change to adapt to the triumphant Muslims' will and determination.

What we do not see in the conventional history books is the correlation between this human-to-God commitment and the "natural," economic, social, environmental, geographic, and atmospheric conditions in which man finds himself. It is a flaw of written history to have neglected this area; there are many *āyāt* that unmistakably connect man's social behavior and the response of the "natural habitat" to it. If Muslims are out to change the world, and no doubt they are, they have to realize that as they dwell on social and human behavior modification to meet the standards and values of Allah (ﷻ), they will be tested in order to have the elements of nature itself accommodating Allah's (ﷻ) new world order. But in the interim, Muslims will have to show how patient and tolerant they are of this process. Once they carry the burden and emerge victorious they will realize Allah's (ﷻ) words, **"It is they upon whom their Sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are on the right path."**

This lesson of trials and tribulations teaches the finite Muslims and prepares them for a period of fear. They will naturally fear their enemy but they will also at the same time, as might be expected, approach Allah (ﷻ). The Muslims will find themselves between fear of the enemy and a hope in Allah (ﷻ) who is the source of all

restitution and salvation. Muslims must sooner or later realize that it is not they who are opposing the *mushriks* in the physical standoff; in point of fact, it is Allah (ﷻ) through the immaterial world by virtue of the Muslims' utter and desperate reliance in Him. Allah (ﷻ) placed the Muslims in the position they are in; and He is certainly capable of conquering the *mushrik* enemy and the fear in Muslims' hearts. Muslims must know in their public mind that lip-service to *īmān*, the belief in Allah (ﷻ) and His power, will not automatically result in superior physical and material power vis-à-vis the enemy, nor will it secure wealth and prosperity, nor will it hold back trepidation, anxiety, or a phobia of the enemy. Muslims have to be prepared for the will of Allah (ﷻ) to take its course in improving the quality of Muslims through disasters and crises, as outlined in this *āyah*. The early Muslims in the battles of al-Aḥzāb (the Confederates) and Tabūk had to survive with a few dates to eat and nothing else. That was their meal: a few dates.

At the end of this disciplinary lesson there is a very important detail requiring emphasis. After all the specific information regarding the types of obstacles and trying times the Muslims are to be put through, with the probability of starvation, horrific challenges, dwindling financial resources, work forces, and agricultural return, after all this preparative schooling in the nature of the course to Heaven, Allah (ﷻ) does not promise the Muslims victory, upper class mobility, or the spoils of war. In this context the only thing Allah (ﷻ) promises these unyielding and ironclad Muslims is His blessings, His mercy, and His testimony. These pioneering Muslims were being prepared for proximity to Allah (ﷻ), not some political or military gains. They were trained to be detached from a worldly strategy and attached to a heavenly one. They were being drilled on how to conquer their own selves and yield to Allah (ﷻ).

At this stage they were not interested in human trivialities; even the material triumph of their faith and doctrine was not their immediate concern. The only thing they wanted and the only thing they concentrated on was Allah's (ﷻ) ardor, His grace, and His testimony to their valor and single-minded pursuit of His forgiveness. This mindset of theirs became the goal and the strategy.

All other talk about any worldly tributes was noise at a distance. When they were spiritually fixated on this target and mentally headstrong on their way to Allah (ﷻ), they knew that what was to follow — whether it was defeat or victory, progress or regression, gain or loss, positive or negative — would be in Allah’s (ﷻ) vast plan of things to happen. Agony or joy, jubilation or torment, and advances or setbacks were of no concern to them as long as they were gaining Allah’s (ﷻ) confirmation and affirmation. Whatever results would emerge from this love of Allah (ﷻ) through wretchedness, hunger, alarm, poverty, monetary deficit, shortfall of manpower, and paucity of produce, whatever would come from all this would not be theirs, but Allah’s (ﷻ).

They were satisfied to have Allah’s (ﷻ) approval, His honor, and His testimonial as their reward. And this, too, is our reward as committed Muslims — not an immediate buzzing economy, nor immediate political leverage. We sacrifice our property, our possessions, and our very lives; we endure dismay and anguish; we pass through times of hunger and anxiety; and we kill and are killed. In the end, the reward is Allah’s (ﷻ) favorable reception, His respect, and His clemency. This is all the Muslims want. And this is more valuable than a material victory and more precious than any worldly reward. It is more satisfying than any outcome of revenge policies, as is the case with all the opponents of Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn*.

This is the type of education and preparation that is able to bring about a new world order. And these are the task-descriptions of those individuals who qualify to change the course of human history. Human history will not change for the better by enlisted personnel who are addicted to their binges, who need to satisfy their animal desires, and who cannot go a few weeks without their candy bars, magazines, posters, music, and films.

Fine-Tuning the Human Conception of *Dīn*

The *āyāt* from 158–177 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* constitute an independent lesson. One of the purposes of this lesson is to fine-tune the human conception of divine *dīn*. This lesson does not lose sight of the Yahūdī fifth column in Madinah. It continues to floodlight them, but this time it addresses Yahūdī interference with the human understanding of Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*. Reaffirming their nature, the Yahūd continued to pretend unfamiliarity with *ḥaqq* while still acting as a mental virus that sought to weaken the intellectual integrity of the Muslims, thereby hoping to induce instability and insecurity within the Islamic state of Madinah. All this is presented in a generalized way. The object lesson is a red flag that directs the Muslim mind to pitfalls dug by Yahūd and others whenever this *dīn* becomes a fact of life.

- (2:158) [Hence,] behold, al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah are among the symbols set up by Allah; and thus, no wrong does he who, having come to the House on pilgrimage or on a religious quest, strides to and fro between these two; for, if one does more good than he is bound to do — behold, Allah is responsive to gratitude, All-Knowing.
- (2:159) Behold, as for those who suppress evidence of the truth and of the guidance which We have bestowed from on high, after We have made it clear unto mankind through the divine Writ — these it is whom Allah will reject and whom all who can judge will reject.
- (2:160) Excepted, however, shall be they that repent, and put themselves to rights, and make known the truth; and it is they whose repentance I shall accept, for I alone am the Acceptor of repentance, the Dispenser of grace.
- (2:161) Behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah and His power] and die in that state of denial their due is rejection by God, and by the angels, and by all [righteous] men.

الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٥﴾ إِذْ تَبَرَأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا
 مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٦٦﴾
 وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّا كَرِهْنَا لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّأُوا مِنَّا
 كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ
 النَّارِ ﴿١٦٧﴾ يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا
 تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ
 بِالسُّوْءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَن تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ
 لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ ءَابَاءَنَا أُولُو
 كَأَبَاءِهِمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَمَثَلُ
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّ
 بُكْمٌ عُمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾ يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُلُّوا مِن
 طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ ءِتْيَاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾
 إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ
 لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
 رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ

وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ مِمَّا قَلِيلًا أَوْلِيَّكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ
 وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
 أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾ أَوْلِيَّكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ
 بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ ﴿١٧٥﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَلَ
 الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ
 ﴿١٧٦﴾ لَيْسَ إِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالْيَوْمِ الْأَخِيرِ وَالْمَلَأْتِكَةَ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ
 وَعَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَآيَتِنَا وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ
 السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَعَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ
 وَالْمُؤَفَّرَاتِ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ
 وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولِيَّكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولِيَّكَ هُمُ الْمُنتَقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

- (2:162) In this state shall they abide; [and] neither will their suffering be lightened, nor will they be granted respite.
- (2:163) And your God is the One God: there is no deity/authority save Him, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace.
- (2:164) Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth; and the succession of night and day; and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man; and

in the waters which Allah sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon; and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth; [in all this] there are *āyāt* indeed for people who use their reason.

- (2:165) And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that allegedly rival Allah, loving them as [only] Allah should be loved; whereas those who have attained to faith love Allah more than all else. If they who are bent on offense could but see — as see they will when they are made to suffer [on Resurrection Day] — that all power belongs to Allah alone, and that Allah is severe in [meting out] punishment!
- (2:166) [On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been falsely adored shall disown their followers, and the latter shall see the suffering [that awaits them], with all their hopes cut to pieces!
- (2:167) And then those followers shall say, “Would that we had a second chance [in life], so that we could disown them as they have disowned us!” Thus will Allah show them their works [in a manner that will cause them] bitter regrets; but they will not come out of the fire.
- (2:168) O Mankind! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth, and follow not Satan’s footsteps: for, verily, he is your open foe,
- (2:169) And bids you only to do evil, and to commit deeds of abomination, and to attribute to Allah something of which you have no knowledge.
- (2:170) But when they are told, “Follow what Allah has bestowed from on high,” some answer, “No, we shall follow [only] that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing.” Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of any guidance?
- (2:171) And so, the parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd’s cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice

and a call. Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind — for they do not use their reason.

- (2:172) O you who are committed to Allah! Partake of the good things We have provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks to Allah, if it is [truly] Him you conform to.
- (2:173) He has forbidden to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than Allah's has been invoked; but if one is driven by necessity — neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need — no sin shall be upon him; for, behold, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.
- (2:174) Verily, as for those who suppress any part of the revelation which Allah has bestowed from on high, and barter it away for a trifling gain — they but fill their bellies with fire. And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them [of their sins]; and grievous suffering awaits them.
- (2:175) It is they who take error in exchange for guidance, and suffering in exchange for forgiveness; yet how little do they seem to fear the fire!
- (2:176) Thus it is: since it is Allah who bestows the divine writ from on high, setting forth the truth, all those who set their own views against the divine writ are, verily, most deeply in the wrong.
- (2:177) Virtue does not consist in turning your faces toward the east or the west — but truly virtuous is he who is committed to Allah; and the Last Day; and the angels; and Scripture; and the Prophets; and distributes money, however much he himself may cherish it, upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and upholds [the standards of] divine communion, and renders the purifying dues [*zakāh*]; and [truly virtuous are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they who have proved themselves true,

and it is they, they who are consciously defensive [vis-à-vis Allah's power] (al-Baqarah: 158–177).

This lesson begins by explaining the issue of walking or running between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah; the build-up of traditions and customs concerning this issue made clarification necessary.⁷³ This is also relevant to al-Masjid al-Ḥarām becoming the Muslims' *qiblah*, in the true meaning of the word. Hajj rituals are endorsed with al-Masjid al-Ḥarām as its focus.

Next the Qur'an discusses people of scripture who withhold and conceal what Allah (ﷻ) has revealed in His holy Books. The Qur'an is scathing against those who hold back what they know should be widely proclaimed. Although the Qur'an makes room for those who wish to repent and atone for their indecorous acts, those who insist on *kufr* are damned by the words of Allah (ﷻ).

The discourse also includes an emphasis on Allah's (ﷻ) singularity with evidence, in the universal *āyāt*, attesting to this fact. It denounces those who revere other authorities and deities besides Allah (ﷻ). That is followed by a preview of two groups of people on the Day of Resurrection — those who were leaders in the world and those who were followers — and how both of them on that spectacular day will try to deny their role in this world as they foresee their impending torment.

Then the guiding words of the Qur'an turn to the issue of food. These words disclose the truth of this matter which the Yahūd had hidden and prevented from being discovered. The words of the Qur'an invite all people to partake of wholesome and lawful food but to be vigilant of Satan, who bids people to indulge, binge, and be arrogant. This is followed by a remarkable call to the committed Muslims to enjoy the *ḥalāl* and desist from the *ḥarām*. This dichotomy of lawful vs. unlawful food, which was used as a point of contention by Yahūd, who privately knew the truth of the matter, is explained here and put to rest.

Then the steering words of the Qur'an become lightning and thunder against those who know the scriptural truth but conceal it. And to add insult to injury, we are told they get little compensation

for doing so. The Qur'an's ultimatum to them is horrifying because of the contempt, the wrath, and the slight awaiting them on that coming Day.

At the end of this lesson there is a passage on *birr* (virtue, righteousness) that speaks to the basis of divine dedication and earthly effort. In this *āyah*, we are taught what *īmān* really is. *Īmān* consists not of formality or outward gestures and rituals; it is not lining up toward the east or west. It is a sense and a task that comes from being connected to Allah (ﷻ) by hand and heart. This Qur'anic explanation is a follow-up comment on the "controversy" generated by the Yahūd about the Muslims' *qiblah*.

The tone of the Qur'an still raises a sense of confrontation and battle. On the one hand, it highlights a confrontation inside the human self that demands internal effort to correct misconceptions and distorted values. And on the other hand, it speaks of the battlefield outside in society, where there are currents of conspiracy, calumny, and conceptual concoctions that are maliciously arrayed against Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*.

Clarifying the Significance of al-Şafā and al-Marwah

[Hence], behold, al-Şafā and al-Marwah are among the symbols set up by Allah; and thus, no wrong does he who, having come to the House on pilgrimage or on a religious quest, strides to and fro between these two; for, if one does more good than he is bound to do — behold, Allah is responsive to gratitude, All-Knowing (2:158).

In the first instance we have to reconstruct the available facts concerning the advent of this *āyah*. When this *āyah* was revealed to the Muslims in Madinah, Makkah was under *mushrik* occupation. Muslims are instructed by Allah (ﷻ) to place their seat of power and authority in Makkah when Makkah was out of their reach and out of their control. This explains why the Muslims in Madinah concentrated all their efforts and strategy on Makkah. There were

other important cities and towns, but none as important as Makkah because Allah (ﷻ) in this *āyah* and in previous *āyāt* focused Muslim attention on Makkah. But this *āyah* goes even further as it draws the Muslims into internal Makkah: al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ. The Qur’anic citation of Makkan details was a way of binding the Muslims even more to their seat of integration and power, even though Makkah’s decision makers at that time were the front-line enemies of Islam and the committed Muslims.

There are several narrations about why this *āyah* was revealed. But one stands out as a particularly credible explanation given the dynamics and facts of that time, particularly the development of emotional and social ties between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār as well as the effacing of every worldly *-ism* that could distract or dilute the popular absorption of Islam. This explanation indicates that some Muslims had their reservations about jogging between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ during the time of Hajj and ‘Umraḥ (the lesser pilgrimage). Their disinclination had to do with the fact that they used to do this type of jogging in the days of *jāhiliyah*; besides, above these two places were two idols, Asāf and Nā’ilah. Therefore, Muslims felt unwilling to repeat what they had been doing during the time of *jāhiliyah*. One hadith related by ‘Āṣim ibn Sulaymān says,

I asked Anas about al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ. He replied, “We used to associate them with the *jāhiliyah*. When Islam came we refrained [from going there]. So Allah sent the *āyah*, ‘[Hence,] behold, al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ are among the rites set up by Allah...’”⁷⁴

Al-Sha‘bī added the following continuation of the above hadith,

Asāf [an idol] was on al-Ṣafā, and Nā’ilah was on al-Marwaḥ. The [*jāhili*] custom was to approach these idols but after Islam this practice was not acceptable to Muslims. So it was in this context and to this frame of mind that the *āyah* was revealed.⁷⁵

The precise time this *āyah* was revealed is unknown. However, it seems probable that it came down after the revelation of the *āyāt* declaring the Ka‘bah as the Muslims’ *qiblah*. It should be noted here that the word *sha‘ā’ir* in this *āyah* and elsewhere in the Qur’an refers to the socio-religious motions of the Hajj, which are more precisely translated as *rites*. Latter-day Muslims have extended this word to include such activities of Islam as the ‘Īd prayers, Jumu‘ah prayers and the *adhān*.

Even though there was a state of war between Makkah and Madinah, it appears that some Muslims from Madinah had access to Makkah, and therefore could perform Hajj and ‘Umrah.⁷⁶ But the early Muslims were sensitive about continuing to do the things they used to do in *jāhiliyah*. Islam had given them a fresh beginning, and they did not want to taint it by going back to habits and customs that had been part of their *jāhili* life. This attitude was also evident on other occasions during the transitional period from *jāhiliyah* to Islam.

Thus was the effect of becoming Muslim: they did not want to associate with their unclean past, they did not want to identify with the errant customs of old. They no longer felt any affinity to that past, having developed a revulsion for it. It no longer belonged to them and they no longer belonged to it. To them *jāhiliyah* was neither to be remembered, nor returned to. The Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) had transformed them so radically that they wanted to distance themselves as much as possible from all things *jāhili*. The fully fledged and veteran Muslim hates to be affiliated with any vestige of *jāhiliyah*. It was as if the Prophet (ﷺ) held them and shook off every shadow and every hint of that *jāhiliyah*; the elements of their souls and minds were reformulated and realigned to hate *jāhiliyah* and everything that represents it. *Īmān* stunned them out of their past and charged them with the spirit of Islam.

This sensitivity about reverting or regressing to *jāhili* norms, feelings, ideas, and behavior is a barometer of a Muslim’s assimilation into Islam. The first contemporaries of Islam could not tolerate anything identified with *jāhiliyah*, so Allah (ﷻ) taught them what belongs to *jāhiliyah* and what belongs to Islam. These were rites and rituals that had their roots and origins in the practices of

Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). These need not be surrendered to the *jāhili* society. They have to be relocated in their proper Islamic context. Muslims need to know if they partake of this Ibrāhīmī tradition or practice, they do so with the new standards, values, and concepts of this divine Writ, and not because it was the *jāhili* custom and convention. This becomes the Islamic reform of authentic scriptural practices, which have no relationship to the *jāhili* establishment. It is at this level and within this climate that the following *āyah* was brought to bear on those pioneering Muslims, “[Hence] certainly, al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ are among the rites set up by Allah...”

Do not let the *jāhili* system stand between you and Allah (ﷻ); reclaim what is rightfully Allah’s (ﷻ). If you do so you will be serving Allah (ﷻ); your *sa’i* between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ has a new spirit, the spirit of Islam, and therefore the *jāhiliyah* has no relationship to it. When your hearts and minds are motivated and moved by Allah (ﷻ), the idols of *jāhiliyah* (in this case Asāf and Nā’ilah) are irrelevant. In going to these parts of Makkah, even though Makkah is under *jāhili* occupation and even though this occupation has its idols and icons in these sacred areas, it is your motivation that counts. If you go there to reclaim or recover these symbols of Allah (ﷻ), you will be rewarded and compensated by Allah (ﷻ). **“And thus no wrong does he who, having come to the House on pilgrimage or on a religious quest, strides to and fro between these two [places: al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ].”**

In fact, the injunctions of the Qur’an and the practice of the Prophet (ﷺ) approved of almost all the sites of pilgrimage that had been enshrouded in tribal traditions and Arabian folklore in the *jāhili* period, but not the particular actions or rituals conducted there. The entire process was cleansed of all idolatrous associations and *jāhili* imagery. All practices were henceforth adjusted and aligned to their scriptural standards and principles. Everything possible was done to re-establish the original practices and pattern of rites as taught to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) by Allah (ﷻ).

The *āyah* ends with a clause that encourages voluntary acts, **“...for, if one does more good than is required of him — behold, Allah is responsive to gratitude, All-Knowing.”** This is signifi-

cant, as it implies that going to these Abrahamic symbols of Allah (ﷻ) in Makkah is left as a voluntary act, despite the inviting and compelling words of the *āyah*. There is no order from Allah (ﷻ) to go there; but for whomever can make it to Makkah, Allah (ﷻ) mentions his generous and abundant reward for those who would extend their greetings to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ).

The historical significance of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah go all the way back to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'il (ﷺ), and Hājar. Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) took Hājar and Ismā'il (ﷺ) to the Arabian peninsula (Ḥijāz). He left them in an arid area, with neither people nor water and only a container of dates and a container of water.⁷⁷ As he left, Hājar asked him, “To whom do you leave us?” He answered, “To Allah (ﷻ).” She replied, “I am pleased with Allah (ﷻ).” This is when Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) turned toward Allah (ﷻ) and said,

O our Sustainer! Behold, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley in which there is no arable land, close to Your sanctified Temple, so that, O our Sustainer, they might devote themselves to a standard of binding to You [*ṣalāh*]; cause You, therefore, people's hearts to incline toward them, and grant them fruitful sustenance, so that they might have cause to be grateful (14:37).

Soon after Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) left on his way back to Palestine, the mother and child ran out of water. The mother was hungry and thirsty, and had no more breast milk for her infant. When the child's condition became critical the tender mother could not bear to watch; she would run to the hilltop of al-Ṣafā to see if anyone was in sight, and then to the hilltop of al-Marwah. Then she would return to her child. She did this seven times. After the seventh time she heard a voice from where her son was. She immediately called out, “Help, help if you can.” Then she realized it was the angel Gabriel (ﷺ) at the well of Zamzam. The child was striking the sand and water was flowing out from under his feet. She began to drink and then fed her son. Birds came to the water, and the

birds caught the attention of roaming nomads. It was the tribe of Jurham that settled there, and became the keepers of Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) family. Ibn 'Abbās reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*That is how [why] people stride between them [these two places].*"⁷⁸

Muslims must realize that, while they are running back and forth between these two hills, they are following in the footsteps of Hājar. She was tested by means of hunger, fear, and a total lack of resources. She was reduced to utter poverty and deprivation. She was brought into the care of Allah (ﷻ) by the adverse physical conditions around her. But she did not give up. She was patient and courageous. These qualities solicited Allah's (ﷻ) intervention. Now we have kings and presidents going to Hajj and briskly walking between these two hills, with little apparent realization of the humility and courage associated with the very example they claim to be following. If Hājar were alive today, they probably would not even want to look at her. Yet these very same people are responsible for policies that are breeding millions of Ismā'īls who are dying of malnutrition, hunger, thirst, starvation, and famine.

The invocation of these meanings in the movement between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ is so profound that Allah (ﷻ) permits Muslims to briskly trot as Hājar did to save her infant, for the sake of trying to bring back life to a beloved one who is in the desperate and final moments of life. The initial motivation of a mother's care for her expiring infant is more important than who controls Makkah and the Ka'bah. The irony nowadays is that there are nominal Muslims who are ruling Makkah and then there are habitual Muslims who are visiting it. Yet, both are oblivious of this feminine expression of care, which was so overwhelming, that Allah (ﷻ) wanted Muslims to go there and regain these meanings even when there were idols at both al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ. Now, with the Saudis in charge, there are no material idols there, but instead there are Muslims whose bodies move between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ but whose minds and souls are stationary.

This *āyah* is an education for those who tend to see the surface of things but cannot reach their deeper meanings. The question is whether the presence of idols should deter from an act of devotion

(the *sa'ī*) that enriches the worshipper, or whether these original meanings should be strong enough to nullify the presence of a few meaningless rocks.

The Jewish and Christian Scriptural Cover-up

Then the Qur'an's words expose those who hold back from the counsel and evidence Allah (ﷻ) has sent down to them. This *āyah* in particular refers to the Yahūd, who are also dealt with in previous *āyāt* of this *sūrah*. This return to the Yahūd implies that they have not given up trying to sabotage the Muslims' new *qiblah*. Thus does the Qur'an deal with them,

Behold, as for those who suppress evidence of the truth and of the guidance which We have bestowed from on high, after We have made it clear unto mankind through the divine Writ — these it is whom Allah will reject, and whom all who can judge will reject. Excepted, however, shall be they that repent, and put themselves to rights, and make known the truth; and it is they whose repentance I shall accept, for I alone am the Acceptor of repentance, the Dispenser of grace.

Behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah and His power] and die in that state of denial their due is rejection by Allah, and by the angels, and by all [righteous] men. In this state shall they abide; [and] neither will their suffering be lightened, nor will they be granted respite (2:159–162).

People of previous scripture at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) knew that the Qur'an is the word of God because the scripture already in their possession verified it. They also knew from their own scriptures that the revolution in progress under the Prophet's (ﷺ) supervision was of divine validity. Yet, despite knowing all this, they hid it from the public eye. Allah (ﷻ) showed them the light and the way and they chose to obscure the truth. These Jewish and

Christian sophists never accepted the challenge of Islam and the Qur'an; rather they tried, and still try, to make the Prophet (ﷺ) appear to have been influenced by them, and to have patched Islam and the Qur'an together under their influence. Their argument goes roughly as follows,

Muhammad in his early days accompanied the Meccan trade caravans, and often met Jews and Christians who probably first turned his interest to religious questions. At the age of about 40, his mind became strongly occupied by meditations on God, the hereafter, and the Day of Judgment which he believed to be close at hand. Knowing that God revealed Himself to other peoples through His prophets, he became convinced that he had been chosen as the Arab prophet, and publicly proclaimed the revelations which he claimed to experience through the intermediation of the angel Gabriel; these eventually constituted the Qur'an.

Scholars (Jews and Christians) have long discussed to what extent Muhammad was influenced by other religions; some emphasize the influence of Judaism, while others maintain a greater and earlier dependence on Christianity. Certainly, [according to them] Jewish lore and tradition played a "significant" part in Muhammad's revelation, in his tenets of faith, and religious precepts. He held that all Holy Books were copies of a heavenly model and that, accordingly, all revelations were essentially one, having, however, been distorted in several ways by the respective people. He therefore repeatedly emphasized that his mission was only [according to Jewish and Christian scholars] to confirm what had been revealed to former prophets and to correct the distortions. Consequently, he referred with respect to Hebrew Scriptures and the "Jewish" prophets, "quoting" extensively from the Bible and other Jewish sources as far as his scanty and sometimes erroneous knowledge reached [*nastaghfir-allāh*].

His early conviction that there existed no essential difference between Judaism and Islam led him to the hope that the Jews would welcome his mission and accept the new faith. In his attempt to win over the Jews he adapted, in Medina, the ritual of his community to theirs in some points, adding, e.g., a third daily prayer [sic], introducing a day of fasting corresponding to the Jewish Day of Atonement, fixing a day of public prayer after the model of the Jewish Sabbath, and directing his followers to turn to Jerusalem during prayer. When he realized that his hopes would not be fulfilled, he changed some of the new rites and adopted a hostile attitude toward the Jews of Medina who, gradually, were either annihilated [according to them] or expelled. The other Jews of Arabia, however, were treated more leniently, possibly from political and economical considerations. One of his wives (Safia) was of Jewish origin.⁷⁹

So, instead of declaring the scriptural words about the final Prophet (ﷺ), the Yahūd and Christians treat him as if he were some literary pirate! These types who are silent when the truth begs for advocates are known to almost everyone somewhere. They know the truth, but they deliberately refuse to acknowledge it; indeed, they actively deny and conceal it. *These types are not ignorant, and they do not need any da'wah.*

According to this impeccable *āyah* in Allah's (ﷻ) faultless Qur'an, there are verses in both the Old and New Testaments (or in their original versions) that testify to the coming of a final prophet, the foretold features and qualities of whom Muhammad (ﷺ) fulfilled. What has happened to these verses? Why are there many versions of the New Testament that, we are told, are locked up in the Vatican? And could there be other places where such relevant information is also kept out of sight? You might erroneously think you are living in a "liberal" world — a world that is characterized by "open minds" and a "flood of information." But why, when it comes to the Qur'an and other scriptures, are the scholars

and experts of Judaism and Christianity so secretive? Their worldly interests dictate this unbecoming behavior. This attitude is apparent every time they have a public brush with the facts of scripture and revelation. When “responsible” people in “sensitive” positions begin to withhold vital information, they set themselves up for legitimate criticism and harsh condemnation.

These scholars who are expected to publicize every word of their scripture, but who choose instead to shroud God’s words, bring upon themselves disapprobation and blame. Execration and detestation come their way from all who are privy to truth and reality. They are even imprecated from heaven above. Their unforgivable act calls down censure from all quarters. These men of the cloth who seclude and sequester God’s enlightening words and verses deserve their eventual punishment,

Behold, as for those who suppress evidence of the truth and of the guidance which We have bestowed from on high, after We have made it clear unto mankind through the divine Writ — these it is whom Allah will reject, and whom all who can judge will reject (2:159).

“...Except for those who repent, turn back and reveal [the truth]; them, I will pardon, for I am the Acceptor of repentance and the Initiator of grace.” The Qur’an opens a window of opportunity for those whose courage has failed them; it gives them hope. No one need ever despair of Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy and love; no one should ever dismiss Allah’s (ﷻ) forgiveness. Whoever wishes to rid himself of such terrible consequences should turn wholeheartedly to Allah (ﷻ) and atone. It is not enough only to ask Allah (ﷻ) for forgiveness; a person has to work for forgiveness. These biblical scholars should confess the truth about Muhammad (ﷺ) in biblical scripture, and have the courage to act accordingly. This would in no way mean that Jews or Christians are inferior to Muslims, and it would not mean that Muslims are superior to Jews or Christians. When Allah (ﷻ) says to us all that He is Oft-Forgiving and Merciful, He means it in an inviting, welcoming way.

But those Biblical seclusionists who are not interested in publicizing scripture, those who insist on “classifying” scriptural material about Muhammad (ﷺ), the Qur’an, and Islam, must suffer the dire consequences of their deception, **“Indeed, those who cover up [scripture or any part of it], and die insisting on this cover up, they are the ones who will exact Allah’s damnation, as well as the angels’ and all peoples.”**

Among intentionally obscured biblical citations foretelling the advent of Muhammad (ﷺ) is Deuteronomy 18:17–18, which currently reads, “Then the Lord said to me [Moses], ‘What they have said is right. I will raise up for them a prophet like you, one of their own race, and I will put words into his mouth. He shall convey all my commands to them’...”⁸⁰

The way in which this text has been distorted and translated, conceals a distinct reference to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). *Sūrah al-A’raf* provides a detailed account of how these savants of scripture obliterated every clear reference to Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ). They tampered with the scripture by means of translation, by misquoting, and by refractory interpolations of their own self-centered “logic.” They gave the word *Paraclete* the meaning of *advocate* and *spirit of God*. In some unauthorized versions of the Bible, this word obviously refers to the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ).

The lesson here extends beyond those who conceal former scriptures to those who conceal latter scripture, and this would include those who are entrusted with the Qur’anic scripture. If they act like Yahūd in hiding some of the obvious meanings of the Qur’an, or in trying to cover these visible meanings with distorted logic and establishmentarian rhetoric, then they deserve the same penalty. If a Muslim scholar, in response to a query about a scriptural issue, hides the truth or misleads, then he is guilty of the same crime. Muslim scholars are not supposed to obscure anything that Allah (ﷻ) has said. If such a scholar is asked anything, he should reply faithfully and honestly. If he does not know the answer, he should say so. If he knows someone else who can answer, it is his duty to refer the question to that scholar. One of the outstanding features of Islam is its espousal of a vociferous and public represen-

tation of *ḥaqq*. The Qur'an exhorts and inspires its adherents to declare Allah's (ﷻ) words and *āyāt*, to explain their meanings to people (that is why Muslims have a tradition of *tafsīr*), and to encourage people to do right not only personally but also in a structured manner for the civic and social space — hence the concept of *amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa nahī 'an al-munkar* (the empowerment of moral concepts and conduct and the deconstruction of immoral concepts and conduct). The contrast with the sophists of earlier scriptures is obvious. Among the Qur'anic *āyāt* emphasizing the necessity to explain Allah's (ﷻ) words frankly is,

And so, Allah accepted a solemn pledge from those who were granted earlier revelation [when He bade them], “Make it known unto mankind, and do not conceal it!” But they cast this behind their backs, and bartered it away for a trifling gain; and how evil was their bargain! (3:187).

And let there grow out of you a community [of people] who convey what is good and who enforce moral standards and who ban immoral standards; and it is they, they who shall attain prosperity. And be not like those who have drawn apart from one another and have taken to conflicting views after all evidence of the truth has come to them; for these it is upon whom tremendous suffering is in store on the Day [of Judgment], when some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]. And as for those with faces darkened, [they shall be told], “Did you deny the truth after having attained to faith? Taste, then, this suffering for denying the truth!” (3:104–6).

Cursed are the children of Israel who are bent on denying the truth; cursed they are by the tongue of David and Jesus, the son of Mary — this, because they disobeyed and were wont to transgress [against Allah

and man]. They would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did; vile indeed was what they were wont to do! (5:78–79.)

Today, this difference between Judeo-Christian clergymen and Islamic scholars is stark. The earth is swamped by greed and vice, but there is no significant Judeo-Christian opposition to this world order. Yet Muslim scholars, intellectuals and ‘alims oppose this satanic order with their hearts, tongues, and hands. Not only do they speak out against the grip of evil on societies, governments and institutions, but they are to be found on the front lines of active opposition to it. These evangelists, Talmudics, and Bible-thumpers are pussy-cats when it comes to speaking for God. At a time when Muslim ‘alims are roaring like thunder and fighting like heroes against the tyranny of money, moguls, and magnates their Judeo-Christian counterparts are brown-nosing these same capitalists, czars, and neo-Christis. We ask these men of the cloth, especially the Christians who would be more amenable to reason, “Is Christ truly your way and your light; or is the president of the United States your way and your light?”

Late in 1998, a theatrical play opened in New York in which the Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) was presented as a homosexual (*nastaghfir-allāh*) who loved his enemy by kissing him on the lips!⁸¹ How can any Muslim, Christian or Yahūdī “man of God” see such a thing and do nothing about it? How can priests, rabbis, or ‘alims accept such public slandering of God’s Prophets (ﷺ) on earth and then dare not protest against it in public? How can anyone with a religious title say they stand for scripture when this very scripture is the laughingstock of cinemas, theaters, and exhibitions? Those who began by hiding the scripture’s endorsement of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) have ended up having no scripture to speak of.

Another example of this grand Judeo-Christian historical cover-up of Allah’s words (ﷻ), and evidences alluding to their veracity and legitimacy, was related to this writer by one of his scholarly associates, Dr. ‘Abd al-Ṣubūr Shāhīn, an Egyptian Islamic

thinker, teacher, and writer. This author and his Egyptian friend have been acquainted with each other for several years and normally meet at the Conference for the Proximity of the Islamic Schools of Thought, held annually in Tehran, Iran. On one of these recent occasions, Dr. ‘Abd al-Ṣubūr Shāhīn, related an “incident” from the life of a longtime kindred spirit of his, Malek Bennabi (1905–1973), a prominent 20th-century Algerian, Arab philosopher and thinker.⁸² The fact that the name of this philosopher is obscure to most Muslims is a story in and of itself. However, what normally distinguishes Arab philosophers from their European counterparts is that most of them study the Qur’an and are generally very familiar with it; and thus their philosophical approach deals less with the nature of individual human beings and how it affects society, and more with the nature of societies and how this shapes individual behaviors. Because of the Qur’anic influence on their thought patterns, many of the more enlightened ones suggest that there is no such thing as Arab nationalism or that there is no equivalent to the nationalist experience in the Arab historical narrative. In fact, they say that, because of the inclusivist nature of the Arabic experience and restructuring within Islam, if there was an Arab nationalism, it would manifest itself as the will to end all nationalism.

Given that he was raised during the post-colonial occupation of North Africa, Malek Bennabi obtained most of his secular education in France and ended up spending most of his latter life in Cairo. During his last 20 years, he was encouraged by some of his Catholic friends to do some research in the Vatican library. However, not just anyone can be admitted into this library; it is typically reserved for the employees of the Vatican itself, and any outside researcher has to get a special dispensation, a day-pass if you will, to be admitted. So Malek Bennabi approached the same Catholic friends and asked them to see if they could make a case for him to do some research there. To his surprise, the Vatican granted him permission to study in the library for a short time.

While in the library, he came across one of the original gospels that did not make it into any of the official versions of the Bible,

which have been around since the Council of Nicea “decided” what would be included in the New Testament. What must be kept in mind here is that the original gospels, Christian historians say there were hundreds, were human accounts — some eyewitness and others, historical compilations of generational recollections — about what happened during the life of Jesus (ﷺ), and by extension, whatever the particular writer could remember of his message and revelation. In all of these gospels, the obvious and abiding controversy was about how the life of Jesus (ﷺ) ended. Was he crucified? Was he raised up to heaven? Did he just disappear? And is he coming back to complete his mission?

For all of the early Christians around Jesus (ﷺ), and for those who lived hundreds of years thereafter, this was a nagging question, a mystery that had never been cleared up. The uncertainty about this event led to the emergence of trinitarian Christianity as well as the antipathy between it and those who did not believe in the official Church version, and the accompanying persecution of dissenters and “heretics.” The Jews claimed to have passed judgement upon Jesus’s (ﷺ) apparent heresy (*nastaghfir-allāh*) and then sentenced him to death, carrying out the penalty by throwing him over a cliff. The Christians believed that either he was crucified on the cross by the Romans, or that he had escaped and gone into hiding. For nearly 700 years the Christians were in limbo about what happened to their prophet. The mystery was cleared up definitively by the revelation of the Qur’an, and this could have been a major reason why many of the Christians in the Holy Land, the Levant, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and North Africa became Muslims in the first 100 years of Islamic expansion and liberation. At the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), upon hearing the recitation of *Sūrah Maryam* for the first time, the Abyssinian king, Najāshī (Negus),⁸³ who had offered sanctuary and protection to persecuted Muslims from Makkah, knew he was listening to the truth. Being a devout and just Christian, he became a Muslim soon thereafter. Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur’an,

[But] he [Jesus] said, “Behold, I am a servant of Allah.
He has vouchsafed unto me revelation and made me a

prophet, and made me blessed wherever I may be; and He has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live, and [has endowed me with] fealty towards my mother; and He has not made me haughty or bereft of grace. Hence, peace was upon me on the day I was born, and [will be upon me] on the day of my death, and on the day when I shall be raised to life [again]!”

Such was, in the words of truth, Jesus, the son of Mary, about whose nature they so deeply disagree. It is not conceivable that Allah should have taken unto Himself a son: limitless is He in His glory! When He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it “Be” — and it is! (19:30–35).

As Malek Bennabi was reading through one of these original gospels, he came across the following account of the crucifixion — or should it be called the *crucifiction*. During the tumult and public agitation preceding the trial of Jesus (ﷺ) by the Roman prefect in the Holy Land, Pontius Pilate, the prefect’s wife was looking from her house at what was going on. Being at a high vantage point, she could see down below a major disturbance in progress, with loud protestations from growing numbers, and wanted to know what was happening. She was informed about the situation by one of her servants, who told her that her husband was about to sentence a holy man; and that what forced the hand of Pilate to even deal with the case was the damning testimony of one of the holy man’s own disciples. She dispatched her servants to fetch both the holy man, Jesus (ﷺ), and his betrayer, Judas Iscariot. When both were brought in front of her, she bid them both to lay out their respective positions. Jesus (ﷺ) went first, and having the certitude of a prophet, spoke with the confidence, candor, conviction, eloquence, and sense of purpose that is to be expected from one delivering the truth. Then it was Judas’s turn. He could not even make eye contact with the prefect’s wife, and fumbled about here and there with his words. It was immediately obvious to the prefect’s wife who was speaking the truth and who was lying, and who ought not to be persecuted for his

abiding wisdom, faith, morals, and hoped-for reconstruction of society along lines of social justice emanating from divine authority. Seeing the obvious contrast in the two testimonies, she ordered her handlers to make Judas look like Jesus (ﷺ) and vice-versa. Some Christian historical accounts indicate that after Pilate questioned Jesus (ﷺ), he later accepted Christianity.⁸⁴ Could his wife's conviction have affected Pilate's decision to rethink his life orientation?

In any case, when Malek Bennabi came across this account, he could not help but recall the *āyāt* of the Qur'an,

And so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge; and their refusal to acknowledge Allah's messages; and their slaying of prophets against all right; and their boast, "Our hearts are already full of knowledge," but, rather, Allah has sealed their hearts in result of their denial of the truth, and [now] they believe in but few things; and for their refusal to acknowledge the truth; and the awesome calumny which they utter against Mary; and their boast, "Behold, we have slain the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, [who claimed to be] an apostle of Allah!"

However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so; and, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of a certainty, they did not slay him: rather, Allah exalted him unto Himself — and Allah is indeed Almighty, Wise (4:155–158).

He asked the Vatican staff if he could somehow transcribe the pages he had read, if he could copy them longhand, or if he could reproduce the information in another way so that he could take it with him. The Vatican refused, saying that not only could he not do as requested, but that he was not even allowed to talk about it at any public forum, and that he could not write about it in any published

article or book. They told him that what was in the Vatican must stay in the Vatican. Being a trustworthy and honorable Muslim, Malek Bennabi stuck to his word and never talked about it in a public gathering or wrote about it, even though he was a very capable writer. Toward the end of his life, Malek Bennabi related this story to a professional intimate, Dr. ‘Abd al-Ṣubūr Shāhīn, who in turn passed it on to this writer at one of the Proximity Conferences.

Now the Church has been “sitting on” this vital information for the better part of 2,000 years. True to their nature, they are hiding evidence that would point to the truth of the revelation bestowed upon Muhammad (ﷺ), and the legitimacy of the last Prophet (ﷺ). Knowing this, many more Christians would have no problem becoming Muslims. But these Christian “lords,” who have little sympathy and few regrets for their numbers falling prey to secularism and atheism, would have a fit supreme if their constituencies were reduced by any who joined the ranks of Islam. The positions they hold in this world, and the corruption that surrounds their ascension to these influential positions in society are more important to them than the exposition of the truth to the majority of their spiritually-hungry flock. They deliberately wish to maintain themselves as sentries at the door of open access to God, admitting those they want and excluding the great bulk of humanity. Every human being has direct access to God, but these concealers of truth do not want them to know that. However, this incomparable Qur’an is filled with myriad evidences of Allah’s presence (ﷻ), this tale being just one of many that alludes to the truth, immutability, perfection, and incontrovertibility of Allah’s (ﷻ) final words, as they were revealed and preserved for eternity in the hands and mission of Muhammad (ﷺ).

Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “*Whoever is asked about something he knows, and then withholds the answer, Allah will throttle him with fire on the Day of Resurrection.*”⁸⁵ If withholding the knowledge of scripture is prohibited by Allah (ﷻ), then is withholding scientific and worldly knowledge also prohibited? After all, this knowledge too is from Allah (ﷻ); Allah (ﷻ) is the owner of all knowledge and He can do with it whatever He wills, and He can

give it to whomever He wills. With the fact of Allah's (ﷻ) absolute ownership in mind, a case can be made that as humans only discover knowledge, they cannot own it; thereby they cannot treat it like personal property and further, they must follow the directions of its Owner regarding its dissemination and distribution.

The aspect of Western civilization related to holding back knowledge from the public, which has roots in its own clergymen withholding information from heaven, has extended into the withholding of what is called today “sensitive” or “classified” information. There is a body of information that is hidden from the public in the name of national security and military research. Upon closer examination of this Western psychology that hides, conceals, classifies, and declares unavailable scientific, technological, and physical discoveries because their power-monopoly deems it necessary and in their “higher interest,” could it be said that this same psychology was at work 1,400 years ago? Could it be said that it concealed, classified, and declared unavailable scriptural, revelational, and biblical information because their monopoly on power deemed it necessary for their “higher interest?”

Scientific and technological information is not all that is classified. The elitist opportunism responsible for life-changing events such as, for instance, the justifications that cause nations to go to war against each other, is also routinely shielded from public view and scrutiny. There is the issue of the USS Maine (1898), which launched the Spanish-American War and the subsequent US invasion of the Philippines. There is the German sinking of the RMS Lusitania (1915) and the Wilsonian “turning” of public opinion to favor US involvement in World War I. There are the escalations leading up to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, which justified the US entry into World War II (1941), and the first and only use of nuclear weapons upon a civilian population. There is the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964), which led to the US invasion of Vietnam. There is the assurance given to Saddam Hussein about the US having no desire to interfere in Iraq's dispute with Kuwait, precipitating the Second Gulf War (1990) and the first dismemberment of Iraq by the United States. And then of course there is the infamous

9/11, which reignited the historical spectre of the Crusades, only this time rebranded as the “war on terror.”⁸⁶

About every one of these “catalytic” incidents, there are open questions pointing to the US as the behind-the-scenes instigator who fomented these crises in order to project the notion that it was wronged, thus rationalizing the invasion and occupation of the so-called aggressors’ territories. In reality, the US intelligence agencies along with an unquestioning and uncritical media are masters at concealing the real provocateurs, and making the victims look like wild-eyed demons, savages, and terrorists. And even though these wars have signalled the frivolous loss of lives of nameless hundreds of thousands, especially in the countries the US has indiscriminately bombed, no public attempt by concerned citizens to uncover the real facts behind these events has ever been successful at breaking through the red tape, official obfuscations, and national security stonewalling.

And then there are the assassins who have gotten away with either killing or deposing leaders, thereby squashing any attempt at regional and local self-determination. Here is a brief list of America’s victims, just in the last century,

1. In the Muslim world: Ali Shariati, Ḥasan al-Bannā, King Faisal, Liaquat Ali Khan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman;
2. In Latin America: Jacobo Arbenz, Jaime Roldos Aguilera, Salvador Allende, Che Guevara;
3. In Africa: Herbert Chitepo, Patrice Lumumba; and
4. In America itself: John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Fred Hampton, and Martin Luther King.⁸⁷

This just pricks the surface. What about all those people, who not being famous, are nonetheless perceived as a threat to an unscrupulous establishment that has shed the restraints of any moral oversight? There are the Arab nuclear scientists and Latin American professors, along with US microbiologists who were looking into the now forgotten but notorious anthrax scare after 9/11. For what reason have these people been mysteriously found dead in some alley or just turned up lying in a ditch somewhere, or been acciden-

tally hit by a car, or been poisoned by minute biological or nerve toxins?⁸⁸ Why are the case files on all these individuals covered-up? Who is hiding and why? And does this desire to kill justice-minded people, sincere investigators, inveterate truth-seekers, and elected representatives of the people, go all the way back to a character trait that did not think twice about persecuting and then killing prophets, and then covering that up to make it look like the killed were just rabble-rousers, troublemakers, and crackpots? And, today, are potential candidates recruited into this assassination bureau by first receiving a regular dose of moral relativism from their local churches or synagogues?

What kind of attitude is harbored in these Western figures who believe that if information gets out into the public about Muhammad (ﷺ) they will feel threatened? What human nature dynamics are at work in this hidebound Western mind that regards public access to state-of-the-art inventions and discoveries as a threat to its security? Indeed, this is a very dangerous human being who is threatened by sharing information with the rest of society and with the rest of mankind. The Western religious establishment after many generations of its selfish and miserly attitude was finally discredited by its own flock. And today the Western scientific establishment is playing that role all over again. It is only a matter of time before it, too, will finally be discredited by its own constituents. This “religious” and secular behavior of withholding vital and public information is damned in the Qur’an and damned by the public.

The other lesson in this discourse is the Muslim position of condemning those who withhold, conceal, and obscure the facts about God, life, existence, and man. The cardinal sin in Islam is denial of the fact of Allah’s (ﷻ) existence, presence, and involvement; this attitude, approach, and program is characterized as *kufir*. There is no argument about a Muslim condemning a *kāfir*. Anas ibn Mālik has it on the authority of Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣīne who heard al-ʿAraj say, “In my days people during the month of Ramaḍān would condemn the *kāfirs*.”⁸⁹ Ibn al-ʿArabī says that eventually if a *kāfir* becomes a warrior opposed to Islam and encountered at the war-front then condemning him prior to that is permissible.⁹⁰ Then

there is the concluding condemnation on the Day of Resurrection when these worldly creatures will be forced to confront their sins, mistakes, deceptive decisions, and public hypocrisy. Allah (ﷻ) gives us a glimpse of what these *kāfirs* will be saying to each other on that awesome day, “...but then, on Resurrection Day, you shall disown one another and curse one another; for the destination of you all will be the fire, and you will have none to succor you” (29:25). There is also damnation of the *ẓālims* (perpetrators of injustice), “Verily, Allah’s condemnation is the due of all oppressors” (11:18).

We Muslims know the meaning of this *āyah*. But when it comes to identifying those to whom the *āyah* refers, we find that some Muslims interfere with this process. If the *āyah* says that Allah’s (ﷻ) *la’nah* (curse, condemnation, rejection) is for the oppressors, then who are these oppressors? Why is it that, when the world is full of oppressors, the Muslims are full of ignorance about their identities? Never have there been more oppressors than today, and never have the Muslims been more reluctant to identify them than they are today. Muslims ought not be shy in this matter, especially when their co-scripturalists are hibernating in this area and when the majority of the world’s people suffer under this abdication of responsibility. The tyrants and aggressors are killing Muslims in greater and greater numbers and with less and less contrition; the least Muslims can do is to verbally express their rejection, condemnation, and denunciation of despots and their courtiers, one by one, and name by name. If Allah (ﷻ), the Light and the Glory, has marked and denounced tyranny and oppression, then why and who are we to fail to uphold Allah’s (ﷻ) rejection and banishment of the same?

Indications of Allah’s (ﷻ) Presence in the Natural World

And your God is the One God: there is no deity/authority save Him, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace. Verily, in the creation of the

heavens and of the earth; and the succession of night and day; and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the waters which Allah sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon; and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth; [in all this] there are *āyāt* indeed for people who use their reason.

And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that allegedly rival Allah, loving them as [only] Allah should be loved; whereas those who have attained to faith love Allah more than all else. (2:163–164).

The integrity of divine authority is the basis of commitment to Allah (ﷻ). The idea of doubting a divine being's existence has never been tightly rooted in public consciousness for a prolonged period of time. Throughout history there have been many definitions of this divine being's character and characteristics, and about His relationship with creation and created beings, but never was there any serious collective denial of its existence. Human nature is deeply imbued with this fact of a God's existence. From time to time, some men have taken issue with His existence, and never has this been more systematic and more sustained than the official and academically generated atheism of Europe's 20th century. From heads of state to university chancellors, and from publicists to students, atheism was, especially during the middle years of the 20th century, fashionable. But this era was an abnormal exception, and that is why it finally began to collapse, lasting not even a century.

The Qur'an brings people back to where they belong mentally and spiritually, in their souls and in their societies. The Qur'an frequently relates to man the fact of Allah's (ﷻ) Oneness: His divinity and His authority are a single whole. This is the basis upon which all other healthy and constructive ideas must be built. No network

of moral values, social standards, and interactive human dynamics is sustainable without acknowledging Allah's (ﷻ) indivisible central and guiding role. Therefore Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And your God is the One God; there is no [authoritative] deity except Him, The Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Grace.”** In the Qur’anic approach, He is the One reference of thought, action, will, and destiny. Nothing is certain and nothing is final without His input and guidance. This contrasts with the West’s approach to God. To Europe and America, God is largely irrelevant to human thought and action. This “model” of God is often illustrated by the inactivity of a clockmaker who, having constructed or “created” a self-sustaining mechanism, winds it up, leaving it to run by itself. Once European thought had established this “mechanical God,” it was only a matter of time before they realized that even this was dispensable.

This *āyah* activates Allah's (ﷻ) care, compassion, mercy, and grace that are antidotes to the frigid European pathology about God. When Allah (ﷻ) is Most Compassionate, the Dispenser of Love and Grace, he cannot become detached from human destiny. Muslims are being prepared by these words to fill this human void — a void in heart and mind, which exists because Allah (ﷻ) is not there. The sensitivity and sympathy of Allah (ﷻ) are stated in the Qur’an many times, so that no reader can ever lose sight of them. This is especially the case in the *āyāt* that were revealed in Makkah when the Muslims were in their formative years. They were taught by repetition and reinforcement that Allah (ﷻ) is *al-Rahmān* and *al-Rahīm*. Allah (ﷻ) was in their blood, so to speak. What a radical difference between an Islamic civilization that places Allah (ﷻ) squarely in the soul, and a Western one that claims God does not exist.

Notice how the *āyāt* of the Qur’an pursue these deniers of scripture. They denied the authenticity of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission 1,400 years ago, and then it took them 1,400 years to deny God altogether. To the typical “Christian” or “Jew” today, whether God exists or not is irrelevant. In the same way, it is irrelevant whether Muhammad's (ﷺ) scripture is authentic or not. The Qur’an makes it clear, through reminders of numerous bygone peoples, that this attitude can only lead to catastrophe. And so the inviting words of the

Qur'an are thorough, **“And your God is the One and Only God, there is no deity [ultimate authority] besides Him.”** God is unique in every sense: He has no blood-relative, no race-relative, and no gender-relative. No human form, shape, color, or intelligence is special to God. He never adopted a son and He never adopted a race; He has no begotten son and He has no chosen race. These ideas end up “recruiting” God for a race, national interest, or “civilization.” Imposed on the Bible by the European mindset, such notions do one of two things: they either sugarcoat racism with religion or they contaminate religion with racism. Allah (ﷻ), in the Qur'an, extends a hand of mercy to these wayward souls in order to bring them back to a pure understanding of who Allah (ﷻ) really is: the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace. These are facts the Muslims affirm whenever they recite *bismillāhi al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*.

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day: and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man: and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon: and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: [in all this] there are āyāt indeed for people who discipline their reasoning (2:164).

Another expression of Allah's (ﷻ) mercy and grace is the fact that He created the heavens and earth, night and day, navigable seas, rainfall, the multiplicity of species, the winds, and the clouds, all in proportions suitable for man. Allah (ﷻ) could have created everything in a manner that would have made human life on earth a nightmare. Imagine if the length of one day was several months and the length of one night was also several months? What would that do to the hormones or the vital signs of the human body? The solar day is the elapsed time between two successive transits of the mean Sun. What if the earth's day had no solar reference to it? How

would life have been (had God deemed it so) if the Earth, the third planet from the Sun, did not have one natural satellite in its orbit, the Moon? The distance and the dimensions in which the Earth is located is a calculated fact, not a haphazard one. Had there been no proportionality in the location of the Earth, there would be no human life in the way we know it today. On the earth there is an oxygen/nitrogen rich atmosphere, liquid water oceans filling low-land regions between continents, and permanent water ice-caps at each pole. The position of Jupiter, the largest planet in the Solar System, deflects asteroids that could potentially collide with the Earth and destroy all life. The Earth is unique in the Solar System for its life supporting characteristics. All this suggests that Allah's (ﷻ) creation was so obviously coupled with His mercy and affection, that it was made conducive for man's prosperity and growth.

In this *āyah*, as in many other *āyāt* of the Qur'an, the word *ard* (earth) is preceded by *samāwāt* (literally, heavens). Depending on the context, the word *samāwāt* can mean different things, however when it is juxtaposed with *ard*, it acquires a definite meaning. The word itself is trans-dimensional. In this case, it may refer to the atmosphere that envelops the earth. What we commonly call the atmosphere is divided into several concentric shells, the lowest being the troposphere, followed by the stratosphere, mesosphere and thermosphere. The outer shell of the atmosphere, at approximately 400 km, from which light gases (hydrogen and helium for instance) can escape, is termed the exosphere. The atmosphere contains the gases vital to life, and shields the Earth from harmful ionizing radiation. In this sense the word *samāwāt* may be referring to, among other things, the layers of gas surrounding our planet. The ionosphere is the earth's upper atmosphere (approximately 50–500km in height) where short-wave radiation from the Sun is absorbed and partly ionizes the gas molecules or atoms, removing their outer electrons and leaving them positively charged. The ionized layers reflect short-wavelength radio waves, and so make long-distance radio-communication possible. The ionosphere is layered according to the concentration of free electrons: the lowest layers, termed D and E, result from molecular ionization, and the upper

layer F from atomic ionization. The thickness of the layers varies with latitude, season, time of day, and solar activity.⁹¹

A broader possibility is that the word *samāwāt* refers to the galaxies. Each galaxy is a family of stars held together by their mutual gravitational attractions. Galaxies exist in a great variety of forms, ellipses predominating, but spirals feature prominently in popular books because of their notable shapes. Masses range from a few million suns to 10 million million times as many. The nearest galaxies to the Milky Way are the Magellanic Clouds, some 55,000 parsecs away.⁹² One of the furthest seen to date could be more than 2,000 megaparsecs away. Galaxies are considered to be the fundamental building blocks of the universe, and are of immense importance in cosmology.⁹³

In various *āyāt* Allah (ﷻ) speaks about *seven samāwāt*. The star family to which our Sun belongs is the Milky Way Galaxy. In shape it is basically a bulging flat disc with a diameter of 30 kiloparsecs, a thickness of 3,000 parsecs at the center, and 300 parsecs elsewhere. The Sun is 8,000 parsecs from the nucleus. Within this disc there are star clusters and interstellar matter. A pair of spiral arms extends from the nucleus and is superimposed on the general distribution of stars. The Galaxy as a whole rotates, faster at the center than further out. The Sun, according to astronomical calculations, takes 250 million years to complete one circuit. There are about a million million stars in this galaxy. Could this be one of these *samāwāt*? Perhaps. The point is that all these details are adjusted to the existence and comfort of man. It is all an expression of how Allah (ﷻ) created life's sustaining system in a way that expresses care and consideration for human life and human beings.

“And in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man...” The ship is a sea-going vessel of considerable size. If we look at man's history and how man has benefited from this God-given phenomenon, we realize how these favors have been a constant in history. Recorded history has it that Egyptians built river-boats around 5,000 years ago; by the time of the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut (3,500 years ago), an expedition went to East Africa using vessels about 20m long. These are the first seagoing

ships of which there are reliable pictorial records; they were steered by oars over the stem. Later, great strides in ship design were made by the Phoenicians, who traded throughout the Mediterranean. About 2,000 years ago, Chinese ships were making voyages lasting over a year. At about the same time, the stern-mounted rudder came into use, and later multiple-masted ships with water-tight bulkheads were developed. In recent centuries, development has been faster, culminating in screw-propelled, double-bottomed, iron-hulled vessels in the last century. Now, of course, more advanced vessels, powered by nuclear reactors, and capable of sailing for months under the surface of the water, are commonplace.⁹⁴

This timeless *āyah* refers to a human utility that has developed over the centuries. The above short history of ships, along with detail in the endnotes, was necessary for reinvigorating our thoughts about this God-given utility to man. Often, when one reads Qur’anic *āyāt* referring to such historical phenomena in general terms, one’s mind tends not to consider the historical background that gives depth to the *āyāt*. The fact that ships float, sail, and are navigable is taken for granted by a much-infering and conditioned human mind. Man can be healthfully thankful to Allah (ﷻ) only when he reconditions his mind, and looks past his easy assumptions, to see the hand of Allah (ﷻ) at work throughout the ages.

“And in the waters which Allah sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living things to multiply thereon.” Similarly, when water comes down to earth, the materialist mind thinks little of it. Precipitation, a climatic term comprising rainfall, drizzle, snow, sleet, hail, and dew, evokes no thoughts of the Creator. A secular scientific mind perceives these processes purely in terms of physical relationships about the rising of cool air, and the condensation around dust particles to form water droplets and clouds, and so on. If the droplet grows big enough, it will fall as precipitation; how it reaches the earth (as rain or snow, for example) depends on temperature differences between the cloud and the ground.⁹⁵ Never does the secular mind think of Allah (ﷻ) as being presently and gracefully involved as the droplets reach the ground in a liquid

state. The contemporary secular and materialist way of thinking about rain and snow excludes Allah's (ﷻ) involvement in such "acts of nature." Man is cruel to himself: Allah (ﷻ) wants us to see Him in the warm and welcoming world around, but we insist on viewing this world in a monotonous and mechanical way. Reproduction in nature when water falls down from the sky and brings life to earth is also an area that does not stimulate the contemporary godless mind to think of Allah (ﷻ). This is one of the essential properties of a living organism. Reproduction in its simplest form is an asexual process involving the division of an organism into two or more parts by fission, budding, spore formation, or vegetative propagation. This whole process is set into motion by Allah's (ﷻ) participation in the calculated rainfall and its amenable earthly receptacle.

"And in the change of the winds..." Likewise, the movement of air along the pressure gradient from areas of higher pressure to lower pressure is one of the basic elements of weather. Pressure gradients develop by the unequal cooling or heating of a layer of atmosphere. The steeper the gradient, the stronger the wind. Wind direction is also determined by the Coriolis force and by surface friction.⁹⁶ The Coriolis force opposes the force of the pressure gradient and, at high altitudes where the frictional effect of the Earth's surface is absent, exactly balances the pressure gradient, producing a geostrophic wind.⁹⁷ In the Northern hemisphere the Coriolis force deflects wind to the right, and in the Southern hemisphere to the left. At low altitudes, the frictional force of the Earth's surface reduces the influence of the Coriolis force, diverting the wind toward the center of the low pressure area.

"And the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth..." A cloud is a visible collection of particles of ice and water held in suspension above the ground. Clouds form when air becomes saturated and water vapor condenses around particles of dust, smoke, and salt. Four principle categories of clouds are recognized: nimbus clouds, which produce rain; stratus clouds, which resemble layers; cumulus clouds, which resemble heaps; and cirrus clouds, which resemble strands of hair. These groupings are further

broken down by an indication of cloud height: strato or low level clouds; alto or middle level clouds; and cirio or high level clouds. Fog is considered to be clouds close to ground level.

As the human mind has gone into the study of the details of these “natural phenomena,” that same human mind has failed to detect the God-intended existence of such phenomena. It is for this human lapse of analysis or deliberate omission of Allah (ﷻ) that He says, “[In all this] there are messages indeed for people who discipline their reasoning.”

The wording is critical, “For people who discipline their reasoning.” It is superfluous to say that with all the scientific information and data around there is a process of reasoning. But this “reasoning” is not a disciplined reasoning: man has not anchored the scientific information he has obtained in the reality of God’s presence and participation in all these “natural phenomena.” Man acts as if God does not exist as long as these natural phenomena are within “statistical” or “predictable” bounds. But when these natural phenomena occur as typhoons, cyclones, violent storms, tornadoes, twisters, hurricanes, killer tsunamis, and other natural catastrophes, suddenly man’s post-rational self is stimulated and then he says helplessly, “O God!” Before man reaches such desperate moments he is reminded here in the Qur’an to anchor his life and existence in the fact that there is a unique God, that this God is One, and that this God is practically and actively involved in the affairs of His universe.

The observations, descriptions, and explanations about earth, celestial spheres, the rotation of night and day, marine navigation, precipitation, cloud and wind formation, are not enough to satisfy the ever-present question of *why*? Why are there these fine-tuned distances among celestial objects, stars, galaxies and nebulae? Why is there a proportionality in this scheme of distances, gravities, light, and heat? Why is there a calculated and fluctuating arrangement between night and day as the seasons of the year pass by? Why is there a difference between a polar day and an equatorial day in both summer and winter (12 hours of sunlight versus six months of sunlight in one stretch before night settles

in)? Why is water the life-spring of vegetation, animal, and other forms of life? Why do clouds and winds work in a pattern that is conducive to man's life on earth? If these facts are addressed with an open mind and an open heart, without the programming we receive in secular schools, and without the conditioning we receive through a godless media, we would immediately accept Allah's (ﷻ) Oneness and Kindness.

The essential question of *why* is never answered by human observation of the “mechanics” of life. When water seeps into fertile soil life, vegetation, and produce emerge: fine. But where did this life come from? The lay mind suggests that it came from a seed, and a scientist will explain that a seed is a mature fertilized plant ovule consisting of an embryo and its food source with a protective cover. But neither has answered the question. Who modeled or fashioned the proportionality of soil, water, and organic matter so precisely that — when conditions are favorable — they come together to produce life? There is always a nagging question that cannot be answered by cold scientific data. Atheists and agnostics, despite the sponsoring Soviet hyper-power behind their “theories” and “hypotheses,” have managed to dodge the core question that can only be answered by acknowledging a superior Power and an all-knowing Authority.

The nucleus of the affair can be summed up in one question: can man create life? And the answer to that is a resounding **no**. It is impossible for man to create life. It is not enough to churn out endless scientific papers addressing the symptoms of life, existence, and being. The pertinent question is why these expressions of “nature” are in proportion to man's life and his activities? Why is everything in the world in its state of nature conducive to man's role therein? Why are all these “mechanisms” in nature (and there are many) calibrated to accommodate man? What all this coordination of phenomena, systems, mechanisms, and networks in ourselves and in the universe, conveys is that there is a purpose and a pattern of benevolence and goodness around us. If only man could break out of his mental shackles and the image imposed on him by corporate greed and interest, he can realize he actually does have a

way out of the day-to-day phobias that come to him through Hollywood, the fourth estate, and establishment religion. He just has to ignore the noise coming from these sources, and then come to Allah (ﷻ) through His word, **“Indeed, in these there are hints for those who discipline their thoughts.”**

There are numerous other *āyāt* that point the same way. They will be discussed as they appear in the noble Scripture, but a few can be quoted here,

He it is who has made the Sun a [source of] radiant light and the Moon a light [reflected], and has determined for it phases so that you might know how to compute the years and to measure [time] (10:5).

And He it is who has set up for you the stars so that you might be guided by them in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea (6:97).

And on Earth there are [visible] signs [of Allah’s existence] to all who are endowed with inner certainty (51:20).

And He it is who causes the night and the day to succeed one another, [revealing Himself in His works] to him who has the will to take thought — that is, has the wit to be grateful (25:62).

And We have established the night and the day as two symbols; and thereupon We have effaced the symbol of night and set up in its place the light-giving symbol of day, so that you might seek to obtain your Sustainer’s bounty and be aware of the passing years and of the reckoning [that is bound to come]. For clearly, most clearly, have We spelt out everything (17:12).

And among His signs are the ships that sail like [floating] mountains through the seas; if He so wills, He

stills the wind, and then they lie motionless on the sea's surface — [and] herein, behold, there are messages indeed for all who are wholly patient in adversity and deeply grateful [to Allah] (42:32–33).

We made out of water every living thing (21:30).

And you can see the earth dry and lifeless — and [suddenly] when We send down waters upon it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of lovely plant (22:5).

It is Allah who sends forth the winds, so that they raise a cloud — whereupon He spreads it over the skies as He wills, and causes it to break up so that you see rain issue from within it (30:48).

And He it is who sends forth the winds as a glad tidings of His coming grace — so that, when they have brought heavy clouds, We may drive them toward dead land and cause thereby water to descend; and by this means do We cause all manner of fruit to come forth (7:57).

And We let loose the winds to fertilize [plants]... (15:22).

And so, when they beheld it in the shape of a dense cloud approaching their valleys, they exclaimed, "This is but a heavy cloud which will bring us [welcome] rain!" [But Hūd said], "No, but it is the very thing which you [so contemptuously] sought to hasten — a wind bearing grievous suffering, bound to destroy everything at its Sustainer's behest!" And then they were so utterly wiped out that nothing could be seen save their [empty] dwellings; thus do We requite people lost in sin (46:24–25).

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed messages for all who are endowed with certainty, [and] who remember Allah when they stand, and when they sit, and when they lie down to sleep, and [thus] reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, “O our Sustainer! You have not created [any of] this without meaning and purpose. Limitless are You in Your glory!” (3:190–191).

But [then] — how many a sign is there in the heavens and on earth which they pass by [unthinkingly], and on which they turn their backs! And most of them do not commit to Allah without [also] ascribing divine powers to other beings besides Him (12:105–106).

These heavenly words call people toward the reality of Allah (ﷻ), His authority, grace, power, and mercy, in effect telling those who think they know it all to reconsider their surface knowledge and delve deeper into the larger purposes of life and being. The *āyāt* make a transition to those who have their minds made up as a result of limited knowledge and the accompanying inflated ego of *jāhiliyah*. And the words of Allah (ﷻ) are, “**And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that [allegedly] rival Allah, loving them as [only] Allah should be loved**” (2:165).

Whether these beings are things, animals or people, nothing and no one belong in the place of Allah (ﷻ). Committed Muslims love Allah (ﷻ) more than anything else. They love Him more than their own selves, more than their families, and more than whatever is dear to man. There is no value or consideration in this world that a committed Muslim loves more than Allah (ﷻ). There is nothing that overwhelms the devout Muslim’s heart and mind more than Allah (ﷻ) Himself. The true relationship between a sincere Muslim and Allah (ﷻ) is a relationship of untainted love. There is a cordial connection and a spiritual splendor between an honest Muslim and Allah (ﷻ). A true Muslim’s

conscience moves toward the Creator with a consuming affection. On the other hand there are those who claim to love graven images, idols, and icons. But in fact their love is dismissed whenever their interests dictate it, and diluted whenever they deem it “necessary.” A good example of this is the love that “Christians” have for Jesus (ﷺ). What type of love is it that does nothing when other “Christians” or “Jews” portray him in movies and in theaters, on the small screen and in books and stories, as a pervert? Muslims, through their love for Allah (ﷻ) and by extension their love for His Prophets (ﷺ), are profoundly shocked by such media presentations. In a sense “Christian” love of divinity is deviant because some of these verbal lovers of Christ extend their love to include Satanic ideas about Christ.

You cannot love God and Satan at the same time!

Worldly Authority Only Has Counterfeit Power

If the offenders could but see — as see they will when they are made to suffer [on Resurrection Day] — that all power belongs to Allah alone, and that Allah is severe in [meting out] punishment. [On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been falsely [adored] shall disown their followers, and the latter shall see the suffering [that awaits them], with all their hopes cut to pieces! And those followers shall say, “Would that we had a second chance [in life], so that we could disown them as they disowned us!” Thus will Allah show them their works [in a manner that will cause them] bitter regrets; but they will not come out of the fire (2:165–167).

These scriptural words speak about those who have worshiped worldly lords in place of the divinity or the authority of Allah (ﷻ). They fabricated “facts” to rationalize their worldly authorities or their establishment deities. And by doing so they inflict injustice

upon themselves as well as their domain. Had they extended their views and expanded their horizons they would have had to acknowledge that there is only One Deity and One Authority. That One is the Eternal God: Allah (ﷻ) who on the Day of Accountability will award evildoers the infliction they deserve. Had these individuals been less world-centered they would have had no choice but to acknowledge that all power belongs to Allah (ﷻ) alone.

This *āyah* tells us that there are two groups of people shouting at each other and disavowing one another. One group is of those who follow, and the other of those being followed. To break that down a little further, there are people in this world who set the tone, define what shall and shall not be done, and set the standards for the rest to follow. These are the high class role-models, principle characters, and “heroes” who are the pacesetters for society. Then there are the rest, who imitate them, as they are brainwashed to do by the media, the “entertainment” industry, and other institutions of modern society. On the inevitable Day of Resurrection, they will all refuse to acknowledge those who followed them blindly.

When all these people sense the punishment awaiting their senseless behavior, the love and admiration that characterized their worldly relations will cease. At that moment, everyone is obsessed only with saving his or her own self. This is true of those who today define the value systems, political systems, and the economic systems of modern life, as well as the power cliques who impose their transnational and corporate interests on the rest of humanity. From Hollywood to Capitol Hill and from Europe to America the decision makers, chief executives, and manipulators stand out as a class of their own. The Bilderbergs, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Trilateral Commission, Skull and Bones Society, Committee of 300, the Freemasons: these “elites” on that Day will have no power and no authority.⁹⁸ They will not even have the power to protect or save their own selves. In this grand assembly the singular and omnipotent power of Allah (ﷻ) emerges. Now these elites who in the worldly life used to enjoy “superior intellectual, political, and economic power” are helpless and hapless.

When the “masses” who adored and admired them on earth realize that their heroes and champions, their icons and stars, their superiors and masters, are nothing, at that moment their inner self will say, **“Would that we had a second chance [in life], so that we could disavow them as they have disavowed us!”**

They have the chance to dissociate from them in this world. But when they are told to do so, as they are being told by committed Muslims here and now, they choose to follow those who have the power, and those who are “privileged.” On that Day it will be too late. No one is coming back to this world to make amends. The choice is now or never.

This whole scene is a moving one. One can watch through the words of Allah (ﷻ) the polarization between these two sets of people on that Day. Where is that love? You — the people, the masses — said you loved these icons, you even wished you could be like them. They were your idols. But why? Because you, the unsuspecting people, were persuaded completely. And why? Because you assumed that these elites had power, but in fact all the power all along was and is Allah’s (ﷻ). It is the power relationship that defined who you were and who they were. And when you take away an attribute that belongs to Allah (ﷻ) and tag it on to these worldly figures you in fact deserve the scriptural comment, **“Thus will Allah show them their works [in a manner that will cause them] bitter regrets; but they will not exit the flame.”**

Now the Qur’anic articulation moves from man’s proclivity to follow the “stars” of Hollywood and the “power-brokers” of Washington to man’s inclination, in general, to consume earth’s provisions in a haphazard, undisciplined, and sinful way. The extended lesson here is to encourage man to benefit from the abundant and wholesome provisions of life, while avoiding its pitfalls; acceding to Allah’s (ﷻ) counsel in this area amounts to walking away from Satan, who “turns man on to filth and nastiness.” An outcome of the human tendency to evil and injustice is laws and officials that institutionalize immorality and inequity. Allah (ﷻ) makes it clear that “precedent” is no basis for a divine system if these “precedents” are in violation of divine standards. Then the words

from on high assail those who try to deify or exalt things or creatures that cannot hear or see. With this understanding there is a continuation of meaning between the previous lesson and this one.

Satan and the Spectre of Ethnicity and National Identity

O Mankind! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth, and follow not Satan's footsteps; for, verily, he is your open foe, and bids you only to do evil, and to commit deeds of abomination, and to attribute to Allah something of which you have no knowledge.

But when they are told, "Follow what Allah has bestowed from on high," some answer, "No, we shall follow [only] that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing." Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of any guidance?

And so, the parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call. Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind — for they do not use their reason (2:168–171).

In the previous lesson, Allah (ﷻ) reminded us that He is the One God. He also reminded us that He is the dispenser of mercy and the provider of grace. Anyone in the course of human history, as an individual or as a society, who puts any idea or being into this position, claiming that there is a counterpart to God, has set himself up for eventual retribution from Allah (ﷻ). If Allah (ﷻ) is the sole Maker and Designer of life and existence, it follows that He is the only one who can tell us what is right and what is wrong, what is moral and what is immoral, what is *ḥalāl* and what is *ḥarām*. Another way humans confirm the Oneness of Allah (ﷻ) is by accepting Him as the sole source of all human standards and principles, laws and regulations, and *do's* and *don'ts*. It is only sensible to accept our moral philosophy and legal criteria, as well as our prac-

tice of law and interpersonal behavior, from the Being Who creates and provides, Who designs and explains, and Who tests man after giving him His word. Thus are laws the extension of morality, and thus are both morality and laws the gifts of Allah (ﷻ).

It is at this point that He tells us to partake of what is provided for us. The exceptions are what Allah (ﷻ) outlines and explains in later *āyāt*. This invitation to share in the earth's abundance and copiousness is not an open invitation to capitalists and rugged individualists to devour resources at the expense of untold billions. Using Allah's (ﷻ) permission of open access in this *āyah* for a vicious assault on natural and human resources is wrong, **“And do not follow in the footsteps of Satan...”**

This is enemy behavior because Satan is the avowed and sworn enemy of man. It is not within Satanic behavior to move toward what is commonly and mutually good. Satan wants us to do what is wrong and dubious. He then wants us to establish and reinforce laws and canons that protect the wrong and the dubious. Humans are capable of doing all this if they are cut off from Allah (ﷻ). They are even capable of implementing satanic laws and claiming that these are in fact God's laws. This is demonstrated in the history of Yahūd and all *mushriks* who opposed Allah (ﷻ).

O Mankind! Take of what is rightful and pleasant on earth, and follow not Satan's footsteps; for, verily, he is your evident enemy, and bids you only to do evil, and to do what is shameful, and to ascribe to Allah what you do not know (2:168–169).

This *āyah* is an open invitation for everyone together to use all that Allah (ﷻ) has provided for the human race on planet earth. Everything within the sphere of earthly existence is man's to have, with the few exceptions that are called the *muḥarramāt*. Allah's (ﷻ) system is a comfortable one as there is no tension between man and the world around him. The world was made for him, and there is a divinely sanctioned compatibility between man's nature and the universal system. This is Allah (ﷻ) saying to man that

everything around is yours, provided you act responsibly, and provided you access these worldly resources with moderation and good-intent, which is the way Allah's (ﷺ) *khalifah* (deputy, representative) is expected to be. All of this is to be understood and acted upon within a legal and social framework that also comes from Allah (ﷻ). It is reasonable to have Allah's (ﷻ) natural structure at work with Allah's (ﷻ) moral structure. If it is God who created and "thought out" the way nature is going to work, then by His love and mercy, He also chose to equip man with a legal system that was also "thought out" and made to be compatible with the rest of His creation. Otherwise, the only other possibility, akin to the Deist approach, would be a detached God who created and calibrated nature but then created man and left him without help and guidance, to struggle with nature, take on nature, and conquer nature, or be conquered by it.

But this tension and schism between man and nature and between man and God, is not the way Allah (ﷻ) meant us to live. This area — the One source of guidance for both the universe and man — has been a playing field for Satan, who wants man to behave as if there were no relationship between "natural laws" and "man's laws." With such separation of nature from man, or universe from life, or heaven from earth, our human existence becomes one of tension, animosity and instability. The schism between Allah's (ﷻ) laws of nature and Allah's (ﷻ) laws for man sets human society up for unpleasant consequences that are generated by foul human behavior, all instigated by the satanic influence that separates synagogue, church, and mosque from state. It then takes little time for men to begin to poke fun at God and then demean Him. This is what is happening in today's Western "civilization." The norm has become Satan's, although churches, synagogues and temples are all over the place. The fact is that Satan has succeeded in privatizing religion and secularizing the state. The robes of clergymen and judges are empty because the clergyman cannot enforce his "morality." And the judge cannot enforce the commandments of his religious beliefs (if any). Both institutions are empty shells.

But when they are told, “Follow what Allah has bestowed from on high,” some answer, “No, we shall follow [only] that which we found our ancestors believing in and doing” (2:170).

This *āyah* compares two courses of action: following what Allah (ﷻ) has communicated via scripture or following what has passed down from forefathers and ancestors. What Allah (ﷻ) has disclosed to man is known: the Qur’an. Other scriptures are less distinguishable because they have been tampered with for centuries. But the Qur’an authenticates and renews the purposes and contents of all previous divine books. But there are those, and they have power nowadays, who say in effect, “Certainly not; we will not follow this Qur’an. We will follow the course of our fathers or our ‘founding fathers.’” This was the attitude of the *mushriks* of Arabia and also the Yahūd of that time; and it also describes the “Muslims” of Arabia and the Yahūd of our times. It is also true of any group of people who are called to adopt Allah’s (ﷻ) way but choose to adhere to the ways of their predecessors.

These types of people are building a case for ethnicity and nationalism. They cling to their ethnicity or race; they speak about their “common origins” or their “roots;” and they throw in “common experience” to cement their tribal or blood solidarity. Ethnicity and national identity are closely connected though they are not the same; nevertheless it is difficult to understand ethnicity without also studying the formation of nations. Though the myth of origins may be rooted in a selective or inaccurate reading of history, it becomes a defining myth for nations and groups that base their identity on genealogy rather than on ideology or identification with Allah (ﷻ). This concept, which holds sway today, is usually characterized by a long shared history and by shared cultural traditions. There will normally be other features such as common geographical origin, common language, common literature, or common religion, although not all of these need be present. Ethnic groups may have experienced hardship, persecution, or dislocation from territory, and these experiences may strengthen, and some-

times revive, the sense of common identity. Often the term *ethnic* is used for minorities of immigrants experiencing discrimination within a society, thus the emergence of *ethnic identity* and of *ethnic groups* based on a shared experience of oppression and deprivation.

In some cultures, only the upper class is seen as truly embodying ethnic purity, while the mass of the people are considered to be from diverse origins and cultures. Thus the Frankish conquerors of France in the sixth century ruled over a Romano-Gaelic population. Only after many centuries was the notion of a unified French nation-state developed. In English society, ethnicity and culture are closely bound up with class. In many countries (South Africa under apartheid is just one example) an ethnic minority dominates and governs the diverse majority.

Ethnic identity is closely related to the concept of nationality, and there are ethnic bases for the emergence of nations: ties, memories, myths of origin, and so on. A civic nation in Western civilization's definitions is a political and territorial concept, membership of which is based on residence rather than descent (real or alleged). But often nationalism attempts to reconstruct a "golden age" of ethnic purity, drawing on myths of heroes and conquests. As ideas of nations and ethnicity come together, "ethnic purification" or "cleansing" often results. Indeed, where a nation is defined in terms of origin and descent, ethnic "purification" is "logical" and perhaps "inevitable." The pure body must be cleansed of foreign and alien elements, either by murder or by expulsion.

Thus the relationship between ethnicity and nationhood varies. The nation may be regarded as a single ethnic community with common bonds of culture and religion: Jews, Orthodox Greeks, Sikhs, Irish Catholics, and so on. Thus in some cases religion is meshed with ethnicity, and usually it turns out that religion is subordinated to ethnicity; for instance the Greek identity was inseparable for hundreds of years from the tradition of Byzantine Orthodoxy. In some instances, migration also is related to ethnic identity because members of a community may relocate to a new country, replacing or expelling the previous inhabitants — as did the European colonialists who settled in the Americas at the

expense of the native American population. Later, other groups of similar origin were admitted into the community. The US, Australia, and South Africa present examples of diverse communities with conflicting concepts of ethnic and national identity. Over time, notions of ethnic origin and national identity may change. There are some 40 million Americans of Irish, or part Irish, origin, of whom over 50% are of Protestant background. But very few of these regard themselves as Irish, and the term *Irish* has come to be associated exclusively with Roman Catholics.

The term *ethnics* is often used to describe particular minority groups, though such usage is tautological (redundant), for if some are ethnics, then all are. More common in Britain is the term *ethnic minorities*, a term often used interchangeably with *black population*. In the US, by contrast, *ethnics* is often used to refer to groups other than blacks — Greeks, Poles, Italians, etc. Ethnicity is central to European notions of identity, not least since the erosion of political forms of identity.

This *āyah* is particularly informative as notions of ethnicity extend to become fully-fledged racial or racist concepts. After Allah (ﷻ) has made the whole earth open for all peoples, the notion of building communities and nations on the basis of ancestral solidarity reeks with racism as a foundational basis for human societal aggregation. *Ethnicity* is often used as a euphemism for *race* as in the term *ethnic minorities*. In the UK, the Race Relations Act of 1976 refers to *ethnic or national origins*.⁹⁹ Indeed the concepts of *ethnicity* and *race* are often used interchangeably, yet while there is overlap, the concepts are different. Race is a pseudo-biological concept, closely related to color, and racism is a structural and cultural reality that results in discrimination and disadvantage. Ethnicity is not necessarily related to race, color, or religion, although these will often affect it. Ethnic identity will be passed from one generation to another, and may include distinct languages, religions, political, and cultural styles, and so on.

Over time aspects of ethnic identity may weaken, as with many children of South Asians in Britain. However, in situations of conflict, ethnic identity may be aroused and strengthened, and

may become the basis both of withdrawal into enclaves and of organizing and campaigning for improved conditions. Thus the Italian enfranchisement in American cities, or the Chicano movement of agricultural workers of Mexican descent in US agricultural areas, are examples of such strengthening of ethnic identity. In the context of racism and deprivation new forms of ethnic identity may emerge such as the *African American* identity.

The political systems in the West allow “Arab Americans,” “Pakistani Americans,” and their kind to function along such lines as lobbies, pressure groups, and so forth, as long as they are willing to submerge their Islamic character beneath their ethnic identity. If these Muslims were mentally independent enough to raise their Islamic identity above all else, then the West would make it difficult for the ones who consider themselves Muslims first by characterizing their socio-political activism as “religious fanaticism.” This is the case with the Americans whose ancestors were brought to America by force in slave-ships hundreds of years ago, and who are now beginning to discover their Islamic character. These “blacks” are to be tolerated as long as they accept the limitations of ethnic identity but if they dare think about their Islamic identity, then they are not welcome in this “land of the free.”

There is considerable concern that the concept of ethnicity is being appropriated in a racist form. Some consider this appropriation inevitable. The growth of ethnic nationalism presents a major challenge to anti-racist work. There has been criticism of *ethnic absolutism* and the tendency to see a nation as culturally homogeneous; some writers argue that ethnicity has replaced social class as the major form of social division.

There are indications that nationality and citizenship are increasingly being understood in terms of ethnic origin. There has been a growth of ethnic exclusiveness in Germany, where a strong emphasis on *stock* is part of the racial heritage. While the current stress is more on customs, language, culture, and institutions, such a stress is similar to the earlier concern with blood and descent, and may be identical in its effects. The naturalization laws of Germany are a case in point. Turks (Muslims), who have lived there for

decades and whose children were born there, are not entitled to German citizenship because they are not ethnically German. Even the US is looking closer at its naturalization laws, with a tendency to “tighten the screws” on those seeking US citizenship. In Britain, there is an increasing tendency to see nationality as connected with *partiality* and descent. Recently, the concept of *ethnic cleansing* has entered the vocabulary.

In the shifting sands of Western opinion some reject the idea of ethnicity, arguing that race and culture are adequate categories. Some African American writers, such as Cornel West and Paul Gilroy, argue for a new approach to black culture and identity, which transcends the absolutism and “essentialism” of nationalism and ethnicity.¹⁰⁰ But this “new” approach is lacking and partial because there is no solid basis on which to build the substitute social structure. For this reason, the “powers that be” exclude the Qur’an from public discourse because it gives man the necessary building-blocks to enable him to solidify a community and social structure that refers to Allah’s (ﷻ) rules and laws, His moral precepts and concepts.

Ethnic monitoring is the practice of collecting statistical data based on ethnic origin. It was practiced unofficially in parts of the ministry of labor in East London in the 1940s, but only developed on a large scale in the 1980s. It was introduced into the civil service and other organizations in 1985. On the other side of the Atlantic, the ethnic question is so deeply embedded in the American psyche that a person who applies even for a menial job is asked about his or her ethnic or national origin. What type of national or ethnic quality distinguishes one human from another in, let us say, serving a cup of coffee at a diner, or selling computers at a department store? But race runs deep in the instincts of the Western decision maker, even down to the level of one’s local restaurant or neighborhood mall.

So, who is reactionary and who is backward? These ethno-racists, who put into law their own experiences and traditions, enforce them on others without any consideration for the “ethnic,” “racial,” and “cultural” differences of these others? They call themselves “conservative” (a neat word to hide behind), but the ever-

truthful words of the Qur'an expose their true persona: they are like goats who roam around, understanding nothing of what is said to them. If their shepherd calls out to them with words of counsel as to the herd society they have created, they just hear noises in the background. These people are less than human at the level of social organization and cross-cultural communication. At least a beast can hear and see according to its instincts, but these people cannot hear and see at any human and responsible level,

And so, the likeness of those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah's power] is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call. Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind — for they do not use their reason (2:171).

Muffled, thickheaded, and incoherent. One could ask these “founding father fanatics,” “Where are your ears, tongues, and eyes? Are they of no value to you? You act as if you cannot sense human experiences of coexistence, as if you cannot detect the flow of history, and as if you cannot see the bloodshed of racism and bigotry!” But this is what happens to those whose attachment to ancestors is deeper than their affection for Allah (ﷻ). This is what happens when people listen to their “gut instinct” and not to their better judgment. And this is what happens when the laws of God are invalidated and the laws of the jungle prevail.

The *āyāt* of the Qur'an present man with an open world, a world without barriers of national racial segregation and ethnic preoccupations, a world that blends the laws of Allah (ﷻ) in the realm of nature and in the realm of man. The *āyāt* direct our attention to two categories of people who try to subvert the harmonious blend Allah (ﷻ) created between the physical laws that govern nature and the social laws that govern man's interactions. The first group wants an open world that has no barriers to their transnational businesses and enterprises, while the rest of humanity can be locked up within artificial frontiers and international borders. These argue for the elimination of trade barriers, the lifting of

undue taxes on import-export transactions, and a globalization free-for-all. They are not interested in what the Qur'an says; they are only interested in maximizing their profits and indulging their appetites. Their idea of partaking in a free world is pursued through usury (they call it *interest*), bribes, illegal transactions, plundering regional resources, expropriating fertile lands, colonization, transnational theft, and all the abominable acts that render the rest of us borrowers, consumers, refugees, war-victims, and, generally speaking, dislocated people. These call themselves the *internationalists* or *globalists*.

And then there are those who care nothing about the fraternity of the human race. Their concern is to bunker down in their paranoid thoughts and try to militarize their ethnicity or race with ideas of supremacy, racial purity, and global segregation. Their concern is the survival of their race by any means necessary. These call themselves *nationalists*. Both the internationalists and the nationalists are following in the footsteps of Satan because they ignore what Allah (ﷻ) says about the whole affair and seek their own “self” interest, “national” interest, or “race” interest. And sure enough, as the *āyah* warns, Satan through these two types of people has generated animosity: class animosity and race animosity.

And thus it is that against every prophet We have set up as enemies the evil forces from among humans as well as from among invisible beings that whisper unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind... (6:112).

Qur'anic Guidelines for the Healthy Consumption of Meat

O you who are committed to Allah! Partake of the good things We have provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks to Allah, if it is [truly] Him you conform to. He has forbidden to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name

other than Allah's has been invoked; but if one is driven by necessity — neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need — no sin shall be upon him; for, behold, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

Verily, as for those who suppress any part of the revelation which Allah has bestowed from on high, and barter it away for a trifling gain — they but fill their bellies with fire. And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them [of their sins]; and grievous suffering awaits them. It is they who take error in exchange for guidance, and suffering in exchange for forgiveness; yet how little do they seem to fear the fire!

Thus it is: since it is Allah who bestows the divine writ from on high, setting forth the truth, all those who set their own views against the divine writ are, verily, most deeply in the wrong (2:172–176).

By reminding them of their commitment and loyalty, Allah (ﷻ), the source of morality and legality, addresses the devout Muslims in a most honoring way. These are the qualities that bind them to Allah (ﷻ), and also give them the duty of receiving Allah's (ﷻ) ordinances in principle and in practice. He reminds them that He alone is the uninterrupted Provider, *al-Razzāq*, and by virtue of this fact, it is He who, out of His grace and benevolence, instructs them as to what is healthy to have and what is not. If He prohibited an item, it was not because He desired to withhold any hearty and wholesome food from them, but only because that item was noxious and unhealthy. Allah (ﷻ), with all that He has given man, does not seek to deny him any nourishment that is safe and sound. For this man should express his appreciation by acknowledging Allah's (ﷻ) singular care for his needs. He tells man that such an appreciation is tantamount to adoring and worshipping Him, **“O you who are committed to Allah! Partake of the good things We have provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks to Allah, if it is [truly] to Him you conform.”**

The good things here are all that man acquires through moral labor. For this man should be thankful and grateful. To have a better understanding of this *āyah* it would be instructive to take a look at a world that is chaotic when it tries to define what is good for man and what is not. The Arabian *mushriks* had categories of animals that were, in their own customs and habits, off limits such as *al-sā'ibah* and *al-bahīrah*.¹⁰¹ Other societies have had different rules concerning animals that are deemed suitable for human consumption. To save the human soul, many Christians of that time adopted certain social norms for the purpose of inflicting a form of suffering on the human body. There were some high ranking Christian monks, priests, and clergymen who believed that denying the body is a means of nurturing the soul. From this standpoint there were dietary laws that prohibited eating meat, dairy products, etc.; exceptions were made for the consumption of fish. In some dietary regulations fish and milk products along with eggs were also strictly forbidden. There were vegetarians and vegans in the ancient world as there are in the modern world. These were concocted solutions to counter the unhealthy dietary practices of the day, and were thought up by those societies' "health conscious" people.

But there is no scriptural basis for these dietary fads. This amounts to a reaction on the food consumption level to the indulgence that was (and still is) prevalent whenever God's words are no longer the order of the day. To give these dietary restrictions and inhibitions a moral undertone, some quarters of the religious establishment of the time related them to the ascetic and austere lifestyle of Jesus (ﷺ). The grand reaction to the original reaction against over-self-gratification would follow hundreds of years later when a protest movement emerged in Europe to address these swings of "denial" and "indulgence."

In this *āyah* Allah (ﷻ) wants to spare us these "extremes" by telling us to partake reasonably and moderately of the good and healthful things of life and to express our gratitude to Him for saving us from becoming "gastrophiles" or "gastrophobes." For further enlightenment and nourishing knowledge Allah (ﷻ) details what

we should avoid for our own well-being, **“He has forbidden to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than Allah’s has been invoked.”**

Dead meat (carrion, offal, rotting flesh) is unfit for human consumption. A clean person is averse to dead flesh, as he is to blood. The issue of meat and its consumption is not a simple one. And for that reason Allah (ﷻ) has taught us the process by which we may obtain meat that is less harmful to our health. Meat is the edible flesh of animals used as food. Beef, veal, and lamb as well as poultry are permissible as long as they are prepared in accordance with the *dhabh* and *halāl* standards outlined in Islamic dietary procedures. It would be enlightening to have a general idea of meat, meat preparation, and consumption to realize how important it is for man to understand that Allah (ﷻ) cares for him when He tells him to have meat prepared properly and to avoid certain types of meat.

In 2005, in the USA, the average person ate 66.5 pounds of beef, 50 pounds of pork, 0.5 pounds of veal, and 0.8 pounds of lamb. However, beef’s popularity has steadily declined since the late 1970s as chicken and fish have become more popular. In 2005, Americans per capita consumed 86.6 pounds of chicken, 16.4 pounds of turkey, and 16.3 pounds of fish.¹⁰² Much of this change in taste is due to consumer concern about cholesterol and fat. (As of yet, this author is not aware of any scientific studies on the consumption of *halāl* meat as opposed to *non-halāl* meat as it pertains to the buildup of cholesterol and fat in the human circulatory system).

The consumption of meat, a prime source of food poisoning or diseases caused by microorganisms, could possibly transmit pathogens and toxins into the human body. Estimates of food-borne gastroenteritis (irritation of the stomach and intestines often accompanied by vomiting and diarrhea) range from 33 million to 81 million annually, depending on the number of unreported cases. Bacteria, viruses, fungi, worms, and protozoa¹⁰³ are major causes of food-borne disease throughout the world. Disease-producing (pathogenic) organisms are usually transmitted by the oral-fecal route, generally through contaminated food and water. Most food poisoning in the US is caused by bacteria. A variety of bacteria may pro-

duce toxic materials (toxins) rather than cause infections. Food inherently contains bacteria, harmful and otherwise, unless sterilized. Bacteria can also be introduced from external factors, such as soil, dust, poor sanitary habits, inadequate hygiene, household pets, and insects.

Microbial contamination causes problems in foods that are not cooked long enough or are handled improperly after cooking. Heating food destroys most viruses and bacteria, however, bacteria can rapidly multiply in food left at room temperature or kept warm. Refrigeration slows bacterial growth, while freezing prevents it. If food is left unattended for a long enough time, certain bacteria will produce very toxic substances that may not be destroyed by heating or freezing. Some prominent examples of possible microbial contamination of food include salmonellosis, shigellosis, infectious hepatitis (type A), *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7, staphylococcal food poisoning, parahemolytic food poisoning, *Perfringens* food poisoning, viral gastroenteritis, campylobacteriosis, botulism, and worms.¹⁰⁴ In the “make-money” commercialism and consumerism of our time there is another issue that still has not been considered by our respected ‘alims to the extent that it has seeped into the public Muslim mind and onto its dinner table. And that is meat contaminants: foreign substances, tissue contaminants, or excessive amounts of growth promoting compounds that are present in meat. Antibiotics, growth promoters, pesticides, and thyroid gland are examples of substances that may contaminate meat and poultry.¹⁰⁵ More than 20,000 animal drugs are in use and, according to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 500–600 synthetic chemicals are present in beef alone; most are “probably harmless.” However, 42 are suspected of causing cancer and another 20 are suspected of causing birth defects.¹⁰⁶ Some of these chemicals have been found to be present in meat at levels higher than those set by the FDA. Since January 1989, European nations have banned US beef grown with growth-promoting hormones. In the United States there is no way to know which meats, poultry, or animal products are even slightly contaminated. US consumers frequently have a choice of buying organic beef and

organic poultry, supposedly grown without growth promoters and excessive drugs.

Another aspect of unprincipled and unscrupulous meat production and the latest public health crisis to play out on unsuspecting peoples' dinner tables is mad-cow disease or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), a chronic, degenerative disorder affecting the central nervous system of cattle. The largest outbreak occurred in the late 1980s in the UK, followed by Ireland, France, Portugal, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy. In the UK, it was determined that as many as 179,000 animals were infected and to eradicate the pathogen as many as 4.4 million cows has to be killed. All together, during the 1980s, up to 460,000 infected animals were suspected to have entered into the human food supply.

A British investigation into the matter concluded that the mad-cow epidemic was apparently caused by feeding freeze-dried and pelletized offal (organ meats, skin, head, and bones, which are not normally consumed by Western meat-eaters, and thereby have to be thrown away) to cows raised for meat. The physiology of cows, being herbivores, is not designed to digest meat in any form, with the result that the animal's nervous system begins to degenerate. Consumption of BSE-tainted meat has been connected with new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) in humans, leading to 164 deaths in the UK and 42 in the other countries cited above. Symptoms of vCJD in humans include progressive dementia, memory loss, personality changes, hallucinations, speech impairment, involuntary movements, coordination dysfunction, and ultimately seizures. The US had its own bout with BSE, with the appearance of its first publicized case in 2003. Japan, the largest importer of US beef, stopped all beef imports from the US after these reports, but it yielded to US pressure, again resuming beef imports at high levels, in 2006, despite the complaints of Japanese consumer rights advocates.¹⁰⁷

Fish and seafood, especially in recent decades, have been thought to be healthy alternatives to red meat, not only because of cholesterol considerations, but also because the animals in most

cases do not have to be slaughtered. For this reason, everything from the sea is considered to be *ḥalāl*, even dead fish floating on the surface of a natural body of water. However even the oceans and the seas have not been able to evade the consequences of an undisciplined and insatiable human appetite, socialized as it is by the forces of materialism and consumerism. Mercury and DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, the most well-known synthetic pesticide) contamination of seafood is old news. But what happens on fish farms has not completely seen the light of day. A fish farm is an off-coast netted enclosure, not unlike a cage on land, where fish are “farmed” artificially for meat. These fish spend their entire lifetime in this enclosure and are harvested for food upon growth to the right size; they are not caught out in the wild.

The same kind of experimentation that has gone on with livestock on land is being employed in raising farm-grown fish. Profit strategies, generated by the unremitting pressure to show perpetual annual growth and satisfy shareholders with expanding dividends, dictate the use of growth promoters to “fatten” the fish up quickly. When the fish consume the bulk of their energies in growth, their immune system either suffers or cannot keep up with the rate of growth with the result that the fish get sick; to combat the sicknesses, the fish are also given antibiotics. To complicate matters, the population density inside these fish farms is so high that the fish do not have the same room to move around as they would in the wild. The gene pool used for conception is not as variegated as the wild gene pool, and thus ensuing generations of fish have been noted to be sluggish, sicklier, and not as aware as their wild counterparts.

This is where the business model kicks in. Pressures to show a profit lead to compromises in operational processes because of imposed cost-cutting imperatives. Nets that form the boundaries of the enclosure should be replaced at regular intervals; but to save cost, business owners make a decision to replace a net only if it is damaged with holes. Discovering a hole in a net could take years, but the unintended consequence of this intentional oversight is that some of these depreciated-gene pool fish get out into the wild,

mate with wild fish, and affect the genetic balance of the whole species, not to mention its delicate relationship to its ecosystem and other species.¹⁰⁸ But this is the impact of unrestrained greed institutionalized by unregulated, free-market, trickle-down capitalism; the power culture runs around defecating all over the world and puts the United Nations in the position of a “pooper-scooper” to go behind them and pick up their mess.

Of course, criminal capitalism is part of a worldwide satanic culture, and as such its domestic bases extend far beyond the capitals of Europe and the United States. Reports have surfaced that the Chinese are harvesting millions of dead chickens from area villages and residential settlements. In what would be characterized as unregulated third-world sweat-shops where no standards of health and hygiene are typically observed, the dead fowl are defeathered, soaked in boiling water, colored with a dye to make them look like they have been barbecued, seasoned lightly with some spices and then packaged for sale. Because of the pungently intolerable smell of rotting flesh, workers have been known to vomit while they are processing the dead birds. Currently, there are no statistics indicating what percentage of the worldwide poultry supply is composed of these dead chickens, or whether your local grocer has these birds mixed with others in his meat locker.¹⁰⁹ From tainted health supplements to melamine-laced baby formula, the unregulated Chinese food processing industry is just now coming under major scrutiny. Unfortunately, Muslims, who are supposedly equipped with the best information from Allah (ﷻ), and because of that ought to be in the lead protesting this kind of civilizational disintegration, are nowhere to be found.

Swine meat or pork is the meat of hogs. In Western and non-Islamic societies pork is traditionally considered a source of high-fat meat, hogs have been bred to accumulate massive amounts of fat. A broiled pork chop is 63% fat.

Trichinosis, a disease caused by the parasitic worm, *Trichinella spiralis*, can infect meat. Trichinosis results from consuming infected, raw, or partially cooked pork; it remains a significant disease in

the United States and Latin America. In addition to pigs, wild carnivorous animals such as bears may carry the parasite. Symptoms of trichinosis include fever, gastrointestinal upset, swelling of infected muscles, and severe muscular pain. An unusually high white cell count and recovery of larvae from the blood, in addition to more information gathered from immunologic tests are indicators of the disease. Smoking or salting meat does not necessarily destroy this parasite.

In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, pork tapeworm infection caused by *Taenia solium* is common. Microscopic tapeworm eggs follow an oral-fecal route of infection. Infection can be spread by eating food prepared by food handlers who did not wash their hands before meal preparation. The larvae infect the brain, causing inflammation and seizures. In the United States, infection most frequently appears in communities of recent immigrants, for example, from Latin America. An immunological test can detect parasite antibodies if present. Scrupulous hygienic practice and “thorough cooking” to avoid consumption of contaminated food are important preventative measures.

Sadly, the Muslims of today including many of their scholarly guides, blowing in the wind as they are, have not kept pace with all these developments. But what can we expect when Muslims do not have a central government and authority that is capable of shouldering such tasks?

There is still a long way to go before science discovers that pork is not fit for human consumption. It will also be a long time before human interest begins to bud and research is done to compare strangled meat (meat that comes from animals that are strangled), dead meat (meat from animal carcasses), commercial meat (meat that comes from livestock and poultry fed with antibiotics, growth hormones, etc.), kosher meat (meat that is slaughtered according to Jewish dietary and religious standards), and *ḥalāl* meat (meat that is slaughtered and prepared according to Islamic standards). There seems to be no wide interest in this area because science still has not come to terms with the consequences for the quality of meat that result from the process used to slaughter an ani-

mal. This is to be expected in a materialistic and unreligious society, not from an Islamic one.

The fact is that Muslims have not taken upon themselves this area of research and investigation. Why should they (and how can they) when they almost all live under the influence of secular and god-denying regimes and authorities? It should be a matter of righteous pride for Muslims to be the ones who are enlightened with the Creator's information about dead meat, blood, pork, and other animal flesh that is neither suitable nor healthy for human consumption. Does it not then behoove us to appreciate the scriptural knowledge about such meat? Man's well-being cannot wait until man's mind discovers the facts; man's well-being needs Allah (ﷻ) before then.

“...and that [meat] over which any name other than Allah's has been invoked.” This means any meat that has been slaughtered or prepared in any name but Allah's (ﷻ) — the Creator, Maker, Provider and Denier of life — is also not fit for human consumption. That meat is therefore forbidden or *ḥarām*. The meat itself, physically, may be first grade and choice meat according to a certain set of material standards, but when it is severed from its life without the invocation of Allah's (ﷻ) name, then it becomes noxious and unwholesome for humans to eat. Man does not give life, neither does he deny it. Man has no right to deny an animal its life except in the name of and with the permission of the Supplier of life, Allah (ﷻ). So when a slaughterer takes an animal's life without the name of Allah (ﷻ), he is providing, in a sense, “murdered meat” for the public. And this pollutes, not physically but ethically, the wholesomeness of the otherwise edible meat. In other words, this *āyah* is telling us that meat can spoil not only in a physical manner but also in a non-physical manner. The Qur'an makes it very clear that meat has to be provided for public consumption only after Allah's (ﷻ) name is mentioned at the time of slaughter, otherwise the meat is unsound and infirm. This is no small matter. In everything Muslims do we are required to have Allah (ﷻ) in our hearts and minds; if we become butchers and meat-retailers who deny an animal its life in the name of anything or anyone besides

Allah (ﷻ), then we have violated the standards laid down by Allah (ﷻ), which in the minds of some is even a form of *shirk*.

It is not enough to say that Allah (ﷻ) is One. What is required is human behavior in accordance with the acknowledgement of His Oneness. He is the One Creator, He is the One who gives and takes away life, and He is also the only One who can say what types of animals are edible and then what makes them edible. This renders the whole process of commercializing meat products, from injecting livestock with weight-promoting hormones, and slaughtering livestock with a nonhuman mechanized process, to treating meat (a process designed to preserve and add flavor to meat), questionable in light of these instructions from on high. Of course, there are laboratory and commercial arguments for these processes. Take, for example, meat-curing. Sodium nitrite, sodium nitrate, and potassium nitrate help to prevent a particularly deadly form of food poisoning called botulism.¹¹⁰ The relevant question here from a divine-to-science perspective would be: is there a difference between the quality of meat processed according to *non-halāl* methods and the meat that complies with the standards of *halāl* and *dhabīḥah* meat? The unhappy answer is that biologists, chemists, pathologists, medics, veterinarians, nutritionists, and the host of other relevant scientists have never ventured on a project to compare the quality of both types of meat.

The other aspects of this whole affair is that there are Muslims who read the Qur'an and study all the disciplines of medical science, yet none on either side of this issue, scriptural as well as scientific, can relate the divine to the material: how many diseases are meat-related? How many pathologies are meat-related? How many ailments are meat-related? And how significant is the effect of meat on human behavior itself? The general, as yet un-investigated, answer is that meat does have an effect on our physical and behavioral well-being; the *āyāt* of the Qur'an say as much. But it is up to informed Muslims to shed more light on the eternal facts of the Qur'an. And time has proven that when we Muslims do not have our own curricula or laboratories, when we do not have our self-generated hypotheses and theories, and when we do not have the

structure and the climate that fosters such freedom of thought, we will continue to “limp” in a mental state of “religion” in need of “science” and “science” in need of “religion.”

Then Allah’s (ﷻ) compassion comes to rescue human nature from its rigidity in understanding Him, His dietary laws, and restrictions, even if these are few, **“but if one is driven by necessity — neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need — no sin shall be upon him; for, behold, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.”**

This is a gracious divine law: anyone may “break the law” if the matter is one of survival. If a person is starving to death, he may eat pork to stave off death. Dead meat, blood, meat of inedible animals all may be taken to avoid death. Likewise, if a person is dying of thirst, he may drink liquor, wine, beer, or any alcoholic liquid that will sustain life and prevent immediate death. But the amount of prohibited food and drink ingested in such emergencies may not exceed the minimum. Yes, one may eat and drink of these *muharramāt*, but he may not overeat or indulge. Exactly what is “life-threatening” and exactly “how much” are matters of *fiqhī* (jurisprudential) details which are encountered in the elaborate references of each school of thought. Those who are interested in these details should refer to the different *fiqhī* books on these matters. It suffices here to point out the broad concepts and the general rules in the Qur’an without going into the hair-splitting details that sometimes distract from general principles.

The thoughtful Qur’an places some responsibilities on us in these *āyāt*. In the first place, there should be scientific probes of the type of meat that is obtained from diseased cattle and livestock, poultry, and game. What if an animal dies of a disease? Will the ingestion of its meat mean that the human consumer will be tainted by the animal’s disease? There are some societies around the world that choke the animal to death. What type of meat are we looking at when we investigate dead meat? What type of meat are people eating when they ingest pork, the pig being known for feeding on every kind of filth and garbage? Does this meat affect human behavior? In what sense is one what one eats? And if one eats an

animal that is cannibalistic, are there human behavioral consequences associated with the ingestion of such meat?

There are also other issues. If such meat cannot be eaten, can the skin or leather of such animals be used for other purposes? These are issues that invite rational human investigation. Once again, after stating the Qur'an's general rule on the issue, to delve into the arguments for or against the non-dietary use of the leather (animal-skin made smooth and flexible by removing the hair and tanning) of a *non-dhabiḥah* animal is not the purpose here. A discussion of these details should be left to the Muslim collective conscience and particular level of knowledge to render its opinion, which should be considered neither holy nor final.

Finally, the words that seal this *āyah* are, “**Oft-Forgiving, Merciful.**” Allah’s (ﷻ) attributes are needed here. As we, who are different from one person to another, will never be able to tell exactly how much is “life-threatening” and how much is “life-saving,” Allah (ﷻ) tells us that He is Oft-Forgiving if we misunderstand these ideas, and he is forgiving if we miscalculate the amount of these *muḥarramāt* that will save us or sustain our lives.

The lesson to understand is that Allah (ﷻ) who has created has also provided. Therefore, it is Allah (ﷻ) who should be acknowledged and thanked. Why is it, then, that there are people who easily or tortuously exempt themselves from Allah’s (ﷻ) care? Some insist that Allah (ﷻ) did not restrict what man can eat, and others that man cannot eat what Allah (ﷻ) has created and provided for health and well-being. From gormandizing and carnivorous “all-you-can eaters” to vegan and vegetarian gourmet types, this is what happens when a society fails to observe Allah’s (ﷻ) care for them as they react to their appetites or bounce from one diet to another trying to find out what is healthy and wholesome.

O you who are divinely committed! Do not deprive yourselves of the good things of life which Allah has made lawful for you, but do not transgress the bounds of what is right; verily, Allah does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right. Thus, partake

of the lawful, good things which Allah grants you as sustenance, and be conscious of Allah, to whom you are committed (5:87–88).

These are not the only dietary laws in Allah's (ﷻ) Book, in addition to the other regulated food allowances described in *āyah* 5:3 of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* and the Apostle's (ﷺ) instructions to refrain from eating any flesh-eating animal with canine teeth and every bird with claws, as well as domestic beasts of burden descended from the African wild ass (*Equus asinus*). This means that almost every land and marine food (plants, animals, fish, birds, etc.) is permissible and edible. The few exceptions are those mentioned in this *āyāt* 2:172 and 5:3.

This *āyah* is followed-up by the Prophet's (ﷺ) hadith, "Made permissible to us are two [types of] dead meat: cartilaginous fish and locusts; and two [types of] blood: the liver and the spleen [of edible animals]." ¹¹¹ The Prophet (ﷺ) is also reported to have disallowed eating any wild animal with canine teeth. ¹¹² In another hadith, speaking together about flesh-eating animals and birds, he said, "Eating carnivorous animals that have canines and birds that have claws is *ḥarām*." ¹¹³ On the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) proscribed on the day of Khaybar eating any meat of all domesticated equines, with the exception of horse-meat. ¹¹⁴

Based on an overall review of specialized opinion or informed judgment (*fiqhī* concepts), broadly stated, edible meat can be categorized into three classifications as far as the slaughtering process (*dhabḥ*) goes: marine life, land animals, and those creatures that live both on land and in water. The opinions about those animals that live exclusively in water fall loosely into two groups. One grouping, the Ḥanafī school of thought, basically states that all marine creatures are prohibited except for fish, which are permissible without the *dhabḥ* procedure. The exception to this is floating or drifting fish: if a fish dies and floats on the water, it becomes inedible. The majority of other *faqīhs* say that all marine animals are allowable as food. These include fish, crabs, lobsters, water snakes, sharks, etc. These are *ḥalāl* without the *dhabḥ*. It does not

matter which way these animals are caught or how they die; they remain edible. The exception is if these animals show signs of physical deformities or features indicative of a disease. There are conflicting opinions about the permissibility of the water-hog.

Opinions about animals that live primarily on land are more extensive, but can be divided into three categories:

1. Animals having no blood, such as grasshoppers, flies, ants, bees, worms, beetles, crickets, spiders, and poisonous animals. All are inedible except for the locust. These inedibles are considered pernicious and distasteful. Man's state of nature feels a distaste for them. Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And [man's state of nature] forbids him the bad things” (7:157)**. The Mālikīs condition the permissibility of locusts on *tadhkiyah* (that is, locusts that die without the butcher's process are unlawful).
2. Animals having no liquid blood such as snakes, bugs, rodents, hedgehogs, jerboas, lizards, etc.: all these are prohibited. They are considered baneful and pestilent. The Prophet (ﷺ) even sanctioned their elimination.¹¹⁵ There are some scholarly disputes concerning a few of these creatures. The Ḥanafīs prohibit the consumption of lizards as there is a hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) advising 'Ā'ishah not to eat it.¹¹⁶ But the majority of scholars cite the incident in which someone ate a lizard in the presence of the Prophet (ﷺ) without his objecting to it.¹¹⁷
3. Animals having arterial blood. This category is divided into two sections: animals that are wild and others that are domesticated. Edible domesticated animals are the like of camels, cows, sheep, and goats. Mules and donkeys are prohibited. Horses are distasteful according to the Ḥanafīs, but not prohibited; however according to the Mālikīs they are prohibited. Of the domesticated beasts of prey, dogs and cats are prohibited. Predatory animals having canines are inedible and unlawful to eat according to all scholars except Imam Mālik, as are all birds with claws. Imam Mālik says that predatory animals are *makrūh* (distasteful, thus falling short of unlawful.) According to Imam Mālik, birds with claws are edible. He cites the surface meaning of, **“Say [O Prophet], ‘In all that**

has been revealed to me, I do not find anything forbidden to eat, if one wants to eat thereof, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine — for that, behold, is loathsome...’” (6:145). The Shāfi‘īs also permit the eating of the hedgehog (*qunfudh*) as well as the weasel.

Certain reptiles (turtles, alligators, some snakes), amphibians (frogs, salamanders, newts), mammals (hippopotami, manatee, seals), and crustaceans (crab, crayfish) live both in water and on land; these creatures have provoked different opinions. The Ḥanafīs and Shāfi‘īs say they are inedible because they are noxious, and in the case of snakes because they are lethal. Mālikīs say that frogs, and other various tailless stout-bodied animals in this category with long hind limbs for leaping, are edible. The reason is that there is no established text for prohibition.

Another opinion, from the Ḥanbalīs, is that every semiaquatic animal that lives any portion of its life on land can only become edible after the *dhabḥ* process, for example, turtles, hippopotami, and penguins. The exception is the animal that has no arterial blood, such as the crab, which is edible without *dhabḥ*. According to the best opinion of the Ḥanbalīs, the lobster has to undergo *dhabḥ* to be edible. According to them, frogs and alligators are inedible.

The Ḥanafīs say the fetus of an edible animal undergoing *dhabḥ* is inedible because it is considered dead meat. Shāfi‘īs and Ḥanbalīs say it is edible because the process of *dhabḥ* is carried over to the fetus. Imam Mālik says that if the fetus gains its features or grows its hair, it is edible, otherwise not. The source of these opinions is the hadith, “*What makes a fetus edible is what makes its bearer edible.*”¹¹⁸

There are differing opinions about the fat of carrion: can it be used in such things as sealing wood or tanning leather? As for the dead-cell parts of a dead animal, such as horns, bones, teeth, and hair, most *faqīhs* permit their use.

It would be inappropriate to start judging which of these numerous positions is more correct than others. It should be noted, however, that the selection of opinions cited is also not exhaustive; there are other schools of Islamic thought that generally agree or

disagree with some of the above *ijtihāds* (scholarly deductions or judgements), such as the Zaydiyyah, Ibāḍīyah, and Jaʿfariyah.

A Warning to Those Who Would Hide Scripture

As could have been expected, the Yahūd were soon up to their old tricks, beginning to dispute these Qurʾanic permissions and proscriptions (*ḥalāls* and *ḥarāms*). It should be noted the Yahūd were already under prior divine restrictions that amounted to a form of remedial training because of their “legalistic” and “technical” approach to the Divine. This is made clear in another part of the informative Qurʾan,

And [only] unto those who followed the Jewish faith did We forbid all beasts that have claws; and We forbade unto them the fat of both oxen and sheep, excepting that which is in their backs or entrails or that which is within the bone; thus did We requite them for their evildoing — for, behold, We are true to Our word! (6:146).

The prohibitions in this *āyah* were peculiar to Banū Isrāʾīl and are not binding on Muslims. They would pick up such seeming discrepancies and use them to challenge the Prophet (ﷺ). Several historical narrations reveal the Yahūd arguing with Muslims about mutual prohibitions. They knew certain foods to be unlawful but could not accept Muslims sharing this divine knowledge that is found both in the Torah and in the Qurʾan. It appears that their objective all along was to discredit and throw doubt upon the contents of the revelations coming to Muhammad (ﷺ). It is because of this spite and resentment that the Qurʾan throws light upon their darkest secrets,

Verily, as for those who suppress any part of the revelation, which Allah has bestowed from on high, and barter it away for a trifling gain — they but fill their

bellies with fire. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them [of their sins]; and grievous suffering awaits them. It is they who take error in exchange for guidance, and suffering in exchange for forgiveness; yet how little do they seem to fear the fire! Thus it is: since it is Allah who bestows the divine Writ from on high, setting forth the truth, all those who set their own views against the divine Writ are, verily, most deeply in the wrong (2:174–176).

These *āyāt* are a warning to the people of earlier scripture who suppress and deny Allah's (ﷻ) words. But these words are also directed to “Muslims” who try to obscure or hide the meaning of Allah's (ﷻ) Qur'an. The truths of Allah's (ﷻ) words are never to be effaced or obliterated. The worldly rewards for keeping back the words and meanings of scripture will never be of any value. There are monarchs, academicians, and propagandists who try to make Allah's (ﷻ) words fit their policies, their agendas and their interests. But those who are able to “communicate” with the Qur'an and understand its root meanings, and then relate them to the world around, now and here, will never soften or concede these godly meanings meant for all mankind. No community interest, national interest, or commercial interest can excuse or justify concealing or distorting the meanings of scripture that Allah (ﷻ) intended.

In the context of edible and inedible foods, Allah (ﷻ) responds to those who want to indulge in this world with a statement that fits the occasion, **“They but fill their bellies with fire.”** We should notice that withholding or keeping silent about Allah's (ﷻ) intended public words and *āyāt* is equivalent to filling the stomach with fire. The mental withdrawal and the psychological failure to communicate and deliver Allah's (ﷻ) words correspond to a waist compressed with fire. Coincidentally, Satan is made of the substance of fire. The inability of those charged with scripture to effect its translation into life's situations creates a vacuum that is

filled by the element of Satan in the stomach. Those who do not stand for Allah's (ﷻ) *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* in matters of the edible and inedible are ingesting the essence of Satan. This earthly reality extends into the life to come: the flames of worldly desires turn into an inferno in the next life.

For the sake of their worldly appetites Banū Isrā'īl disregarded Allah's (ﷻ) law on what is edible and what is not. They “marginalized” Allah (ﷻ) in this life. But in the life of eternity, they will be marginalized because of their worldly approach to Allah's (ﷻ) authority, **“And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them [of their sins].”**

They sinned by disregarding Allah's (ﷻ) authority when he told them what is edible and what is not, and they sinned by withholding this critical information from the public. And they will pay a humiliating and excruciating price for their compounded disregard for Allah's (ﷻ) authority, His knowledge and His care, **“...and grievous suffering awaits them.”**

It would be interesting to see all the establishments in the world, with their far-reaching governments and powers, collapse while these words of the Qur'an become public knowledge. How would people respond when they find out there is a Compassionate God who cherishes humanity so much that He has addressed the rational side of this humanity, telling what is good and what is bad for them, even in what they eat. He has also told them not to keep back or hold in private possession His Scripture, which is meant for all alike. He cares about them so much that He has even told them what the consequences of such selfish attitudes will be. He has given them a mirror that reflects their wayward attitudes when they offend Him, **“it is they who exchange guidance for erroneous belief and torment for amnesty.”**

This *āyah*, like several others in the Qur'an, implies the commercialized attitude that has taken over the behavior of these types of people. The literal translation says they have doled out or traded one thing for another: in this case heaven for hell, basically. They barter their share of God's forgiveness for an excruciating anguish. How short-term and materialistic can people be: they want every-

thing now and cannot wait for what is better in a life that is sure to come. Allah's (ﷻ) scriptural words are telling them what is best for them, what is healthy and wholesome for them, and what is most suitable for them; but they prefer to indulge their senses and satisfy their desires. **“How little do they seem to fear the fire!”**

The fire that burns in their bellies in this world has rendered them without patience. Has anyone ever correlated what people eat with how tolerant and patient they are? Has anyone ever studied the composure and discipline of people who eat the right and nourishing foods as opposed to the tension, rage, and stress of those who eat the wrong foods? Those who eat unsuitable foods seem to have “short fuses.” They cannot endure the “fire in themselves” here in the earthly life; how will they endure the worse fire of eternity?

They invite all this upon themselves: they have freedom of choice but they make a poor choice and pay for it now and in the future. They are responsible for blotting out Allah's (ﷻ) Scripture and His words to the wise. This Book from beyond is meant to be everyone's Book. No one has any right to trivialize or suppress its meanings, **“Since it is Allah who bestows the divine writ from on high, setting forth the truth.”**

It only takes human rational contact with this Word from Allah (ﷻ) to go straight through the ups and downs of life. When one is in communion with Allah's (ﷻ) Word he shall never feel lost, ignored, or forgotten. He shall also be in communion with all others who have found Allah (ﷻ), also in communion with the nature of things, and with Allah's (ﷻ) will as expressed through-out creation.

“All those who set their views against the divine Writ are indeed deeply in the wrong.” These are the types of people who are in conflict with Allah (ﷻ). They are in conflict with the truth, with the nature of creation, and with Allah's (ﷻ) will as manifested through His creation. They are even in conflict with their own selves. This conflict builds up as people tear themselves away from the Sovereign, the Scripture, the self, and sanity. This is an evident fact — one that cannot be ignored or denied — in the nature of societies all across the world today.

The Qur'an makes it clear that Jewish and Christian clergymen and scholars (the higher in rank the more likely they are to be involved) have either deleted or omitted all scriptural reference to Muhammad (ﷺ), the Qur'an, and the onset of Islam. They had descriptions and narratives concerning Muhammad (ﷺ). Having the audacity to conceal information about him, they also had the gall to falsify information regarding dietary regulations. As they "rationalized" one action in the name of various interests, they could "rationalize" the other in the name of "consumption." When there is monetary gain, there is more incentive for such malpractices; scripture to them becomes "...[mere] leaves of paper, making a show of them the while you conceal [so] much" (6:91). The materialist mind can never extend beyond immediate sensual gratification, **"But the enjoyment of life in this world is but a paltry thing when compared with the life to come!"** (9:38).

Divergent views about the essence and core meanings of scripture is anathema. Allah (ﷻ) states,

And [know] that this is the way leading straight unto Me: follow it, then, and follow not other ways, lest they cause you to deviate from His way; this has been enjoined upon you, so that you might remain conscious of Him (6:153).

Verily, as for those who have broken the unity of their faith and have become sects — you have nothing to do with them. Behold, their case rests with Allah; and in time He will make them understand what they were doing (6:159).

But divergent views about the expanded or flexible meanings of scripture are normal. When the human mind works out the inclusive meanings of scripture within different and shifting realities, it will reach convincing heights of parallel meanings to an established and authentic text: Qur'an or Sunnah. These *ijtihad*s are necessary and also compatible. Allah's (ﷻ) ultimatum is to three types

of people: those who withdraw the pertinent meanings of scripture from circulation; those who commercialize “religion” (make money out of tampering with scripture); and those who take issue with accepted and established scriptural meanings. All these things will lead to the flame of damnation. The concluding responsibility of scripture is now the Muslims’ duty. Harsh indeed will our penalty be if we fail to clarify and publicize the true meanings of the Qur’an, today and in the future.

The Qur’anic Expression of *Birr* (Virtue)

The *āyah* that follows is central to all acts of faith and human labor that are lodged in loyalty to Allah (ﷻ). Human virtue is outlined and defined by this spectacular *āyah*,

Virtue does not consist in turning your faces toward the east or the west, but truly virtuous is he who is committed to Allah; and the Last Day; and the angels; and Scripture; and the Prophets; and distributes money, however much he himself may cherish it, upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and upholds [the standards of] divine communion; and renders the purifying dues [*zakāh*]; and [truly virtuous are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they who have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are consciously defensive [vis-à-vis Allah’s power] (2:177).

By all accounts this *āyah* is related to the issue of the *qiblah* and its relocation from Jerusalem to Makkah. These instructions to reposition the seat of power, authority, and legitimacy from David’s city (Jerusalem) to Ibrāhīm’s (ﷻ) city (Makkah) had stirred debates and discussions of dissension during the Muhammadi era. The sig-

nificance and authority of this transfer of the *qiblah* from what had become a racial, ethnic, and exclusive Jerusalem — due to the divisive and intolerant claims of Banū Isrā’īl for Jerusalem as compared with the open-ended, open-minded, and open-air understanding that Muslims have of Makkah — have already been discussed.

This *āyah* brings us to the central statement that addresses the formal and legalistic attitude of Banū Isrā’īl and Yahūd when it comes to rituals, acts of devotion, and compliance with Allah’s (ﷻ) teachings and principles. This conventional, customary, and ceremonial approach to God is the main subject of this *āyah*. Much of this Yahūdī debate had to do with the letter of God’s word and not with the spirit of God’s word.

Communing with Allah (ﷻ) is not achieved by an automatic, physical supplication to the east or west, whether the *qiblah* is the Holy Hall in Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis) or the Sacred Sanctuary in Makkah (al-Bayt al-Ḥarām). Nor can virtue or moral excellence be attained by such robotic rituals. Reflexive motions — “prayers,” “rituals,” or “supplications” — will never promote virtue or moral excellence, nor will they achieve prosperity and success. Virtue stems from feelings and ideas that become behavior and hard work. Only a concept born of conscience can motivate individuals and societies. This level of inspiration and initiative cannot be replaced by the habit of turning to a brick wall in Jerusalem or a cube in Makkah. Palestine, the land of Arabia, the sand, rugs in mosques, or benches in churches are no substitutes for the spirit of God that dwells in man. Man’s redemption will never come by ritual reflexes, be they Judaic, Christian, or Islamic. **“But truly virtuous is he who is committed to Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Scripture, and the Prophets...”**

This commitment to Allah (ﷻ) comes at the level of motivation and ambition. And when this is the case there can no longer be any habitual or mechanical performance of human rituals or “acts of obedience.” This conscious commitment or covenant with Allah (ﷻ) promotes man and elevates his deeds to meaningful and purposeful feats. When man accepts Allah (ﷻ) with such feelings and thoughts, he can no longer accept the forces that “mechanize”

or “automate” his life as well as his rituals and “religious ceremonies.” The distinguishing feature of man here is not his form of worship or his temple of worship; it is the fact that Allah (ﷻ) activates and excites the human beyond convention, tradition, habits, and routine. This commitment to Allah (ﷻ) places its adherent on a timescale that leads to the Final Day. He becomes aware of both transient (or worldly) time and eternal time, the infinite time of the life to follow. The facts of angels, scripture, and Prophets (ﷺ) have made him a part of a historical dynamic that keeps on working its way until the eventual realization of Allah’s (ﷻ) will on earth. A champion for Allah (ﷻ) within these lively and obvious facts of existence is not amenable to the force of habit nor to a formulaic understanding of Allah (ﷻ), morality, or virtue.

This *āyah* in the Qur’an should be read and reread by everyone. The reason is that it renews and rejuvenates the vitality of all that Allah (ﷻ), the Last Day, the angels, the Scripture, and the Prophets (ﷺ) stand for. It is human nature and human weakness that seek to streamline and compress human knowledge and activity. This remodeling of information and channeling of human activity may be vital sometimes. Science may be defined as the art of reducing knowledge to formulas; this process may be workable and even desirable as it helps to enhance the utility of what otherwise would be “scattered data.” But man’s mistake throughout history is that he wants to reduce “religion” to a formula too. When he does so, the “religion” does not remain what it is supposed to be, and nor does man remain what he is supposed to be. Religion itself becomes akin to a mathematical formula and man becomes a mere symbol within it.

This *āyah* breaks the human mould that is glued together by the force of traditions and customs. It tells man that he is not a machine in a mechanical world supervised by a mathematical God. The *āyah* does not stop here. It goes on to tell the religious hierarchies of people that they too cannot and should not convert Allah’s (ﷻ) spirited scriptures and revelations into established customs and practices that once adopted become “tickets to paradise” by reason of spiritless and mindless performance. It is the urge in man to com-

municate and connect with Allah (ﷻ) that is expressed through prayers, *namaz*, and *ṣalāḥ*. In other words, humans need the appropriate vehicle to express and verbalize their relationship with Allah (ﷻ), and Allah (ﷻ) has instructed them on how, where, when, and what to say and do to develop their attachment to Him. The physical movements of *ṣalāḥ* and the apparently ritual motions do not suffice for the strong and spontaneous need in man to join with Allah (ﷻ) and relate to Him. Simply bowing, kneeling, and prostrating during *ṣalāḥ* do not in themselves constitute or generate *taqwá*, *iḥsān*, or *birr* (devotion, moral excellence, or virtue). This is why we see so many “religious” persons, who pray and fast in the physical meaning of the word, but who behind their “religious” facade are anything but religious. At the same time, there are “areligious” persons who do not observe the technical rituals of a religion but who are still candidates for an appropriate relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

This whole discourse began with the Yahūdī legalistic debate about the *qiblaḥ*. They attacked the Muslims’ redirection of their *qiblaḥ* from Jerusalem to Makkah, claiming that Jerusalem alone is the true *qiblaḥ*. This *āyah* answers them by saying the location of Jerusalem or the location of Makkah do not imply preference or qualifications upon these cities; it is the human quality and relationship to Allah (ﷻ) that tips the scale. The land, air, or water of Jerusalem cannot be better in quality than that of Makkah. It is the inclusive and cosmopolitan quality of the people of Makkah that outranks the exclusive and racist quality of the people who claim to belong to Jerusalem, and that makes the difference. By the same token, it is not the religious clothes that are worn by an individual that gains him respect; it is the human factor, quality, and essence that gives the religious attire its aura. This is the character that extends its belief and conviction to the ultimate justice that shall apply on the Final Day. This is the sterling relationship with Allah (ﷻ) that brings the human-to-God relationship into the public and makes of it a social norm and standard. This becomes *iqāmat al-ṣalāḥ*.

It is this persona that imparts his wealth and property — even if there is a part of him that values them — to those who are in need, as listed in this *āyah*: relatives, orphans, the poor, the homeless, those

who deserve pity, and those whose freedom is limited, such as bondsmen, the indentured, and those otherwise deprived of freedom.

This outstanding relationship with Allah (ﷻ) helps a person to break away from slavery to wealth and self-interest. Man can be a slave in more than one sense: he can become tied to serving his appetites, desires, and greed. The emotional attachment to Allah (ﷻ), which is an indicator of a person's *imān*, is represented by *iqāmat al-ṣalāh*: making Allah's (ﷻ) relationship to man public, contrary to today's custom of "a personal relationship" between man and God. It is also represented by the sharing of wealth that comes from Allah's (ﷻ) public presence and His motivation of His servants, not the distribution of wealth that comes from a central dictatorship of tax-collectors who demand payment against threat of imprisonment.

We, in our time and age, see how moneyed people who call themselves amirs and princes, kings and presidents — who automatically turn toward Makkah five times a day, who "ritually" fast the month of Ramaḍān, who "piously" don their flowing robes and "solemnly" speak the Arabic language, who "righteously" perform their Hajj — are gripped by avarice and controlled by their bank accounts. There is no presence of Allah (ﷻ) in their hearts and no presence of Allah (ﷻ) in their public to motivate them to give to the needy who pray next to them in the *masjid*, the destitute people who come for 'Umraḥ, impoverished people who come for Hajj, poverty-stricken Muslims who are dying in the Horn of Africa just across the Red Sea to the west, and in the Indian subcontinent just across the Arabian Sea to the east. These aristocratic princes do not want to be bothered with the *imān* that is defined in this *āyah*, an *imān* that holds them responsible for hoarding their wealth in Western financial institutions while their neighbors are starving. A recent estimate of the cash that is stashed by the nominal Muslims from Saudi Arabia alone (not to mention the vast holdings of the "majesties," "excellencies," and "highnesses") in banks belonging to the *kāfirs* is around \$450 billion. The Qur'an indicts the billionaires of Arabia who believe they can simultaneously claim to be custodians of the two holy cities, Makkah and Madinah, and one of the

richest families on earth, as well as the billionaires of the petroleum-producing countries, and all the other Muslim billionaires who hide behind a facade of religious formalities.

The categories of people who are able to expose these who have stuffed their bellies with satanic desires and emptied their hearts of Allah's (ﷻ) love are the ones mentioned here in this *āyah*,

1. *dhawi al-qurbá* (relatives)
2. *al-yatāmá* (the orphans)
3. *al-masākīn* (the indigent, the poor)
4. *ibn al-sabil* (literally, the son of the street; that is, the abandoned, the refugee, and the homeless)
5. *al-sā'ilīn* (the underprivileged, the wretched who invite pity)
6. *fī al-riqāb* (the bondman, the indentured, the serflike, the imprisoned, and the otherwise deprived of freedom)

This *āyah* from Allah (ﷻ) tells us that one of the most essential — if not the only — confirmation of *īmān* is its transformation into care and redresses to all those sections of society that are in need of compassion and assistance in the form of love, money, attention, compensation, cooperation, and rewards. It makes clear that an unaddressed poverty gap in society is a clear sign of a crisis between man and God.

“Shoot us now, we’re starving anyway!” This was the cry of the orphans, the needy, the poor, the destitute, the homeless, and indentured labor in Egypt on January 18, 1977, when the Cairo riot police were given orders to fire over the demonstrators’ heads.¹¹⁹ The 30,000-strong multitude of poverty-stricken people had raged through the city all day, inflamed by the government announcement of sharp price increases for a wide range of essential goods. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the United States Government were revealing their script to the “Muslim” officials of Egypt. When word came from these power-brokers to the “Muslim” decision makers in Egypt, a price hike of 16% for rice and 31% for petrol was announced.

At that time, about 90% of Cairo’s eight million people — now 18 million — existed on the poverty line: orphans, the poor,

the destitute, the needy, the homeless, and the beggars. Their condition was not made better by the above *āyah*; in fact, it was made worse by chaotic transport, high unemployment, and bureaucratic inefficiency. The 1977 riots were the most severe since the coup that had swept King Faruq from power 25 years before. For two days the acrid blue smoke of the tear gas used to disperse the hungry masses drifted across the city. Elsewhere in Egypt, cars, which only the rich could afford, were smashed and police stations set ablaze. Faced with the real prospect of things getting out of hand, the government of *al-ra'is al-mu'min* (the faithful president) Sadat canceled the price increases, thereby dispersing the hungry crowds.

The price inflations were a desperate last resort by a government whose country was heading toward economic collapse. Because of the extended alienation between a secular government and an Islamic population, which was exacerbated by the “Israeli threat,” one quarter of the national income was being spent on keeping the economy on a war footing. Foreign debts were believed to total \$15 billion and every year the United States provided \$250 million worth of food grants — not enough to rid the country of poverty and not enough to rid the government of growing public opposition, but just enough to keep the tension between both sides critical and polar.

Egypt's situation highlights the problem facing many of the world's “underdeveloped” areas, the poor nations, and those that Allah (ﷻ), the Generous, mentions in the *āyah* above. Prices in general have been rising throughout the world since 1934 but, if the cost of living has gone up, so also, in the wealthier countries, has the standard of living. This has not been the case in poorer countries; especially in the Islamic hemisphere of the world. The gap between them and the richer ones becomes wider each year. One of the problems that anti-Islamic economists and plutocrats have to solve before scripture is discovered by the poor people is how to spread affluence more carefully throughout the world in a way that precludes this *āyah* from fulfilling its financial or monetary implications. Yet the problem has been from the start bedeviled by the very existence of this gap: alienating God from man, alienating

scripture from society, alienating morals from politics, alienating faith from economics, and finally alienating the rich from the poor.

European countries and countries occupied by Europeans — the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand — where all this alienation was established, structured, and aggressively pursued have secured at least a two century head start by exploiting slaves, hoarding wealth, monopolizing markets, and throwing God out of their governments. Pushing their way into the club, but still not being allowed to formulate policy, Russia, China, and Japan have been able to join this legacy of the West's break with God. Behind the scenes Israel has been riding this wave from the breakup of the Church in Europe to the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

Unrestricted greed masquerading as “free trade” — by which the first in industrialized nations gained their colonial head start through loot and pillage in the 18th century — would now prevent undeveloped or underdeveloped people from reaching a competitive position. To maintain this discrepancy between the haves and have-nots, Western interests, capital, and mega-corporations have established various international bodies to camouflage the rapidly increasing polarization between the rich and the poor with overt supplies of financial and technical aid in the form of loans and credit guarantees.

One of these is the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, commonly known as the World Bank. Eight months after the Cairo uprising of January 1977 came news of ambitious programs drawn up by the Bank to “assist” the Egyptian economy from “within.” Meanwhile, the worldwide increase in the cost of food made the earlier figure of \$250 million for food grants look very little. With the aim of reducing the need for costly food imports, technical experts from a number of industrialized nations worked out plans for creating canals and irrigation systems in Southern Egypt in order to grow such crops as tea, coffee, wheat, and sugar cane. If the agricultural “development” succeeds, some industrial settlements may follow — and in all these schemes, World Bank loans will be playing an active role, creating a cycle of dependency that may not go away for centuries.

With 184 member countries, the World Bank is a publicly funded institution, receiving the bulk of its investment holdings from the United States in particular and the rest of the G8 countries to a lesser extent.¹²⁰ After American financial help with the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe, the World Bank gradually started to become an overt instrument of US foreign policy; this process was basically completed during the aftermath of the 1973 oil embargo on the West. At this point, the World Bank under pressure from the US government to show that its loans were benefitting US corporations, began investing heavily in oil, gas, and coal around the world, ostensibly to achieve energy independence for Western countries. "Investing heavily" here means that the World Bank would use data provided by the oil companies to figure out where potential sources of oil were located. Once determined, the World Bank would go in and offer the local governments "below market" loans in order to develop the oil fields.

These loans however would constrain the borrowing governments to use contractors and exorbitantly high-priced consultants listed by the World Bank. And thus companies like Exxon, British Petroleum (BP), Chevron, Shell, Bechtel, and Halliburton became the World Bank's major corporate energy partners. In fact, today, Halliburton is the World Bank's top energy client.¹²¹ Since World Bank loans are public funds provided by taxpayers in the wealthy countries, the World Bank acts as a guarantor, providing multinational corporations a "comfort zone;" in a sense, the World Bank absorbs all the risk in case countries either nationalize or cannot repay the loans, while the multinationals reap all the profits. Of course, they throw a pittance to the locals, keeping only the government executors of the loan contracts in the lap of luxury. Thus, by securing access to energy resources for multinational corporations with public funding, the World Bank acts as a corporate welfare scheme for the rich at the expense of the poor.

In the proposed Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline (2000), for instance, Exxon and Chevron said they would only develop the oil fields on the condition that the Chadian government first accept World Bank loans. What was the result? All the new jobs went to

foreign engineers, consultants, and contractors, mostly working for European and American companies. The only jobs available to the local population were for vendors lining the delivery routes to the oil fields and for prostitution, leading to a situation in which AIDS orphans along with their mothers were constrained to beg along the same routes. There was no investment in educating the local population or to bring them up to speed so that they could assume management of their own resources at some point in the future. Enough revenues were given to the government in order to ensure a more autocratic and less democratic hand when it came to selling oil to Western consumers.¹²² Any calls for the fair-market sale of the energy resources were forcibly suppressed by small-time government operatives on the oil company payroll. Such a situation has led to a series of revolts and counter revolts, mostly between armed groups who also want a piece of the pie, or by lackeys who have assured their foreign paymasters that they will do a better job of bowing to Uncle Sam and his corporate hordes.

Sudan refused this type of “offer” from the World Bank, and the agitation leading to a proposed dismemberment of the Darfur region from Sudan can be timed to this rejection. Make no mistake about it, the greedy oil companies want to make huge profits from these undeveloped regions of the world, but not by putting their own money at risk, and not without the aid of pliable local governments who could care less about the organized extortion of their own material resources.

Similarly, with regard to the BTC oil pipeline that starts in Azerbaijan at the Caspian Sea, goes through Georgia, and ends at the Mediterranean Sea in Turkey, British Petroleum would not get involved unless it was first given free public monies from the World Bank. This oil pipeline goes right through villages — in Georgia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan — that have no electricity, running water, or even a modicum of basic services for the local people. Once again the jobs available for the locals are prostitution and carrying away the large quantities of waste that build up from the undisciplined profligate lifestyle of those who are swimming in windfall oil profits. And this pipeline also has implications related to broader

imperialist-Zionist, geostrategic, military objectives. Consider the connection between the 2006 war against Hizbullah in Lebanon and the desire to make Israel a major player in central Asian oil exports, as written by Michel Chossudovsky,

Is there a relationship between the bombing of Lebanon and the inauguration of the world's largest strategic pipeline, which will channel more than a million barrels of oil a day to Western markets?

Virtually unnoticed, the inauguration of the Ceyhan-Tblisi-Baku (BTC) oil pipeline, which links the Caspian sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, took place on the 13th of July, at the very outset of the Israeli sponsored bombings of Lebanon.

One day before the Israeli air strikes, the main partners and shareholders of the BTC pipeline project, including several heads of state and oil company executives were in attendance at the port of Ceyhan [Turkey]. They were then rushed off for an inauguration reception in Istanbul, hosted by Turkey's President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in the plush surroundings of the Cyradan Palace.

Also in attendance was BP's CEO, Lord Browne together with senior government officials from Britain, the US, and Israel. BP leads the BTC pipeline consortium. Other major Western shareholders include Chevron, Conoco-Phillips, France's Total, and Italy's ENI. Israel's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Binyamin Ben-Eliezer was present at the venue together with a delegation of top Israeli oil officials.

The BTC pipeline totally bypasses the territory of the Russian Federation. It transits through the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Georgia, both of which have become US "protectorates," firmly integrated into a military alliance with the US and NATO. Moreover, both Azerbaijan and Georgia have longstanding military cooperation agreements with Israel.

Israel has a stake in the Azeri oil fields, from which it imports some twenty percent of its oil. The opening of the pipeline will substantially enhance Israeli oil imports from the Caspian sea basin.

But there is another dimension which directly relates to the war on Lebanon. Whereas Russia has been weakened, Israel is slated to play a major strategic role in “protecting” the Eastern Mediterranean transport and pipeline corridors out of Ceyhan.

The bombing of Lebanon is part of a carefully planned and coordinated military road map. The extension of the war into Syria and Iran has already been contemplated by US and Israeli military planners. This broader military agenda is intimately related to strategic oil and oil pipelines. It is supported by the Western oil giants which control the pipeline corridors. In the context of the war on Lebanon, it seeks Israeli territorial control over the East Mediterranean coastline ...Israel is now part of the Anglo-American military axis, which serves the interests of the Western oil giants in the Middle East and Central Asia.

While the official reports state that the BTC pipeline will “channel oil to Western markets,” what is rarely acknowledged is that part of the oil from the Caspian sea would be directly channeled towards Israel. In this regard, an underwater Israeli-Turkish pipeline project has been envisaged which would link Ceyhan to the Israeli port of Ashkelon and from there through Israel’s main pipeline system, to the Red Sea.

The objective of Israel is not only to acquire Caspian sea oil for its own consumption needs but also to play a key role in re-exporting Caspian sea oil back to the Asian markets through the Red Sea port of Eilat. The strategic implications of this re-routing of Caspian sea oil are far-reaching.

...The air campaign against Lebanon is inextricably related to US-Israeli strategic objectives in the broader Middle East including Syria and Iran. In recent developments, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice stated that the main purpose of her mission to the Middle East was not to push for a cease-fire in Lebanon, but rather to isolate Syria and Iran.¹²³

Now we know why Washington has been pushing to “fast-track” NATO membership for Georgia and the Ukraine, and why it has been agitating for these two to separate from the old Soviet bloc of nations; and why a coastal area of Syria bombed by the Israelis did not receive any but the most perfunctory condemnation from the international community and Turkey.¹²⁴ And we also know why the 2006 reversal in Lebanon was such a blow to imperialist-Zionist plans that needed this new revenue in order to provide life support for their already floundering economies.¹²⁵

Such are the “band-aid” remedies that are conspicuously partial in the complex and sensitive field of international “aid” when economists try to keep the hapless, the dispossessed, the homeless, and the penniless in a position of dependence upon the rich, the powerful, the wealthy, and the affluent. Virtually all wars are caused by trade and resource imbalances. Trade disagreements are probably inevitable in an atmosphere of rapacity and avarice, but to avoid economic disasters in the future the whole psychology that is at work in perpetuating these injustices has to be overhauled and excluded from the decision making process.

This *āyah*, that can shock the habitual Muslim out of fossilized religion, is also meant to renew and reactivate the relationship between those who are affluent and those who are in need. That is why Muslims are instructed here to actualize their *ṣalāh*: *iqāmat al-ṣalāh*. And when they give of their wealth to the poor they do so because they are encouraged and inspired to do so. There is a selfish human urge to hold on to money and there is another enlivening human urge to disperse it to those who need it. The latter urge is nourished by the divine relationship and over-

comes the former because the instructions from Allah (ﷻ) lead in this direction.

Among the definitions of virtue is: a habit of the soul by which it is enabled to achieve good. Theologians distinguish intellectual virtues (intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, art, and natural prudence) moral virtues, cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance), and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). But such identifications pale in the face of this Qur’anic explanation. Virtue is acquired by commitment to Allah (ﷻ), maintained by intention and intelligence, and grows through the human labor and moral values involved therein that prevent virtue from becoming a “habit.” That is why Allah (ﷻ) in the Qur’an is keen to have devout and hardworking Muslims fulfill their pledge of allegiance to Him. There are commitments between God and man at varying levels,

And they who keep their promises whenever they promise... (2:177).

And be true to your bond with Allah whenever you bind yourselves by a pledge, and do not break [your] oaths after having [freely] confirmed them... (16:91).

If a conscientious Muslim has made this pledge to Allah (ﷻ), it becomes a feature of his character. A Muslim at this level of conscience is known for his word. And when a people has honest, earnest, trustworthy, and dependable individuals, their relationships, interpersonal and inter-societal, become strong and unshakable. When a devout Muslim honors his word, his pledge and his commitment to Allah (ﷻ), in other words his *īmān*, he becomes the source of confidence and dependability.

“And who are patient at times of calamity, trauma and in circumstances of [armed] conflict...” This is how Allah (ﷻ) molds the responsive and conscientious Muslim character. A real Muslim knows that whatever hardship comes his way is only transitory; there is no hardship that exists into perpetuity. What is

required is for a Muslim to be fortified with his intense feelings of Allah's (ﷻ) presence whatever the pressure and tension. A person who has a "feel" for Allah (ﷻ) will never cave in or crack under stress and strain; on the contrary, he is reinforced by the knowledge that this is Allah's (ﷻ) calculation, and that comfort will always follow annoyance and irritation. Thus does Allah (ﷻ) prepare an *ummah*, not an individual. The Ummah itself has to be prepared for stressful circumstances, episodic and short-lived, but real and potentially destabilizing when they occur. This is to be expected when we talk about the Ummah that is entrusted by Allah (ﷻ) to raise the standards of equity and to universalize justice.

Today, Muslims insisting on living their lives according to Islamic precepts in places as diverse as Iran, Sudan, Algeria, Afghanistan, and Palestine among many others find themselves the target of a wide range of campaigns to force them to renege on their commitment to Allah (ﷻ). Harsh economic sanctions are threatening the very survival of the populace. Our enemies, as did the enemies of Islam at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), are enforcing boycotts and embargoes to test the mettle of the Muslims' Islamic character. This *āyah*, that breaks us from habits and customs, also liberates us from the forces that try to make us surrender to the urges of our desires. But the higher purpose of all this is to continue to be fortified with forbearance and patience at times of need, at times of military assaults, at times of epidemics, "natural" catastrophes and whatever may come our way as we bind with Allah (ﷻ) and take an oath not to abandon our relationship with Him.

"It is they who have proven themselves true, and it is they, they who are [actively conscious] of Allah's power." In this manner people are true to Allah (ﷻ), true to Him because they honored their pledge and their allegiance. This is the standard that Allah (ﷻ) wants to raise people to, which stands in sharp contrast to the level of many pro forma or perfunctory Muslims today. Many are Muslim only by name, culture, and tradition. Perhaps most of those who claim to follow Islam are Muslim only in name and ceremony. They take pride in their performance of Islamic rituals and they claim "credit" for opposing and eradicating "Islamic funda-

mentalists.” The fierce war they are waging against the pioneers and front-line Muslims today is so violent that the committed Muslims and their sympathizers can hardly counter the negative propaganda coming at them from all directions. A sincere and thinking Muslim who has kicked the habit of “traditional Islam,” who is no longer a Muslim zombie that does things automatically by remote control, and whose “crime” it was to wake up and think about what Allah (ﷻ) has to say in the Qur’an and the Sunnah, is according to the prevailing propaganda a “Muslim terrorist” or a “Muslim fundamentalist.” It has become fashionable to call Muslims “extremists.” But none dare call the secular officials or decision makers extremists. Has anyone heard of a “secular terrorist” or a “secular fundamentalist?”

One essential question has to be answered by those who give Allah (ﷻ) their word of honor: does the love of Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) override all other attractions and does it conquer all other threats and fears? An inherited “religion” is incapable of that. A fossilized faith is incapable of that. And a habitual ritual is incapable of that.

Say, “If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your clan, and the worldly goods which you have acquired, and the commerce whereof you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you take pleasure — [if all these] are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause, then wait until Allah actualizes His will; and [know that] Allah does not grace iniquitous folk with His guidance” (9:24).

When the human heart binds to Allah (ﷻ) there is no form of pressure that will sway it away from that bond. The consciousness that Allah (ﷻ) is there and cares for you as you give your life and efforts to Him is so overwhelming that a person feels unparalleled serenity in this relationship,

Those who have pledged themselves to Allah, and whose hearts find their rest in the remembrance of Allah — for, verily, in the remembrance of Allah [men’s] hearts do find their rest (13:28).

A person who only has a verbal relationship with Allah (ﷻ) is happy when things go his way and is vexed and offended when things go wrong. That is because his relationship with Allah (ﷻ) did not penetrate into his feelings, heart and determination. It was a purely formal relationship, “[Know this], so that you may not despair over whatever [favorable thing] has escaped you nor exult [unduly] over whatever [favorable thing] has come to you” (57:23).

The pledge or commitment that a person enacts with Allah (ﷻ) has him vigilant and wide-eyed about everything he does,

...and who, when they have committed a shameful deed or have [otherwise] sinned against themselves, remember Allah and pray that their sins be forgiven — for who but Allah could forgive sins? And do not knowingly persist in doing whatever [wrong] they may have done (3:135).

Committed Muslims are only they whose hearts tremble with awe whenever Allah is mentioned (8:2).

But a habitual Muslim will do his shameful deed, sin against himself, and should Allah (ﷻ) be mentioned to him his heart would be as hard as a rock.

A dedicated and committed Muslim would rather sustain injury to his worldly presence and not to his relationship with Allah (ﷻ). What is so unique about this *dīn* is that establishments, governments, authorities, and regimes all seek to undo this attachment to Allah (ﷻ). Have you ever asked yourself, “Why is everyone “picking on” Muslims in the world? Why don’t they “pick on” Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, etc.?” And the answer is that

Muslims, having a special relationship with Allah (ﷻ), are the only ones who have the ideological fortitude and the life-sacrificing capacity to engage the thinking mind and challenges the defiant governments with confidence and assurance.

Some Building Blocks of *Taqwá*

- (2:178) O You who have committed to Allah! Just requital is ordained for you in cases of killing: the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. And if something [of his guilt] is remitted to a guilty person by his brother, this [remission] shall be adhered to with fairness, and compensation shall be in a goodly manner. This is an alleviation from your Sustainer, and an act of His grace. And for him who, nonetheless, wilfully transgresses the bounds [of what is right], there is grievous suffering in store;
- (2:179) For in [the law of just] requital, O you who are endowed with insight, there is life for you, so that you might remain secure [against Allah's power].
- (2:180) It is ordained for you, when death approaches any of you and he is leaving behind [much] wealth, to make bequests in favor of his parents and other near of kin in accordance with what is fair; this is binding on all who are conscious of Allah.
- (2:181) And if anyone alters such a provision after having come to know it, the sin of acting thus shall fall only upon those who have altered it. Verily, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
- (2:182) If, however, one has reason to fear that the testator has committed a mistake or a [deliberate] wrong, and thereupon brings about a settlement between the heirs, he will incur no sin [thereby]. Verily, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ بِالْحُرِّ بِالْحُرِّ
وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ فَمَنْ عَفَىٰ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَأُتْبِعْهُ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَّاءُ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ مِّن
رَّبِّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ
يَتَأُولَىٰ الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ إِذَا حَضَرَ
أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِن تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةَ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾ فَمَنْ بَدَلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَأَنبَأَ
إِثْمَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨١﴾ فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مَوْصٍ
جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ
﴿١٨٢﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٣﴾ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن
كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى
الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسْكِينٍ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ
لَّهُ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ
الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْءَانُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّن

أَلْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانَ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ
 مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ
 الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا
 اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا
 سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
 فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ
 لَيْلَةُ الصِّيَامِ الرِّفْثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ
 عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ
 وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالْتَمَنَ بَشَرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا
 وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَبْيُنَ لَكُمْ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ
 ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَىٰ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي
 الْمَسْجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ
 لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ
 وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَىٰ الْحُكَامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ
 بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

- (2:183) O You who have committed to Allah! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of Allah.
- (2:184) [Fasting lasts but] a certain number of days. But whoever is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days; and [in such cases] it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make sacrifice by feeding a needy person. And whoever does more good than he is bound to do does good unto himself thereby; for to fast is to do good unto yourselves — if you but knew it.
- (2:185) It was the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur'an was [first] revealed from on high as a guidance unto man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month shall fast throughout it; but he that is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days. Allah wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship; but [He desires that] you complete the number [of days required], and that you extol Allah for His guiding you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him].
- (2:186) And when my servants ask you about Me, behold, I am near; I respond to the call of him who calls, whenever he calls unto Me; let them, then, respond to Me, and commit themselves to Me, so that they might follow the right way.
- (2:187) It is lawful for you to go into your wives during the night preceding the day's fast; they are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them. Allah is aware that you would have deprived yourselves of this right, and so He has turned to you in His mercy and removed this hardship from you. Now, then, you may lie with them skin to skin, and avail yourselves of that which Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of night, and then resume fasting until nightfall; but do not lie with them skin

to skin when you are about to abide in meditation in *masjids* [*i'tikāf*]. These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, offend against them, [for] it is thus that Allah makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might remain protective of Him.

- (2:188) And devour not one another's wealth wrongfully, nor approach with it decision makers with a view to devouring sinfully, and knowingly, anything that by right belongs to others (al-Baqarah:178–188).

This lesson sets forth some of the social features of the developing Islamic society in Madinah, combining personal conformity with social conformity unto Allah (ﷻ). The combination of what is personal with what is social teaches us that we cannot separate ourselves from the world around us; or, to put it differently, that we must develop ourselves and our societies together. Both constructs are possible only when Allah (ﷻ) is the center of our attention and the pulse of our conscience. The *taqwā* of Allah (ﷻ) — feeling and fearing Allah's (ﷻ) power — belongs in the heart of man and it also belongs at the center of the public mind. When the virtue and moral excellence cited in the previous lesson are recognized by motivated subjects of Allah (ﷻ), then the *taqwā* of Allah (ﷻ) follows in building personalities and communities as this lesson does with the first Islamic society in Madinah.

This Qur'anic lesson speaks about the consequences and penalties of murder, and comments on *waṣīyah* (the will of inheritance) at the time of death. Then comes the outline of *ṣawm* (fasting) as an act of devotion, along with its accompanying ritual of *du'ā'* (asking Allah (ﷻ) for blessings and guidance) as well as *i'tikāf* (devotional confinement in the *masjid*). Finally there is a remark about wealth and a warning against obtaining it wrongly.

It should be particularly noted that repeatedly, at every stage of this lesson, Allah (ﷻ) links the issues raised with man's *taqwā*. **“These are Allah's limits: do not, then, offend against them, [for] it is thus that Allah makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might remain conscious of Him” (2:187).**

This lesson is a prime example of how Allah (ﷻ) links the personal and the social, or “religion and state.” In fact, Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* is the unification of man’s order, man’s labor, and man’s life. Building the human conscience goes hand-in-hand with building human society; both must be done on the basis of divine morality and legality. These words from heaven do not permit any state or government to overrule the dictates of an individual’s god-given heart; nor does it permit a society or establishment to escape these divine laws and standards on the basis of “render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and unto God what is God’s.” In the divine order, he who renders, and the object that is rendered, and Caesar, and all else are God’s.

All of man’s efforts have one object: the *‘ibādah* to Allah (ﷻ), the Creator and the Resurrector. We receive what He has given us through revelation and inspiration, and we offer Him back our best adherence in word and deed. We honor Him in life so that He may honor us in death. Along with His creation and provision, He has trusted us with earth and life. This trust is conditional upon our bond and attachment to Him in all that we feel, say and do.

Qiṣāṣ: the Final Word on Capital Punishment

**O You who are secure [in your commitment to Allah]!
Just retribution is ordained for you in cases of killing:
the free for the free, and the dependent for the
dependent, and the female for the female. And if
something [of his guilt] is remitted to a guilty person
by his brother, this [remission] shall be adhered to
with fairness, and restitution to his fellow-man shall
be rendered for the common good. This is an allevia-
tion from your Sustainer, and an act of His grace. And
for him, who, nonetheless, wilfully transgresses
[moral and legal codes], there is grievous suffering in
store; for in [the law of] just retribution, O you who
have creative thoughts, there is life for you, so that**

you might consciously defend [against Allah’s imminent power]! (2:178–179).

“*Yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū*: O you who are [divinely] committed!” or “O you who are secure [in your commitment to Allah]!” This form of address occurs about 90 times in the Qur’an. It is almost always used when a type of “executive” order has to be implemented. The Muslims themselves are many and numerous; but the committed Muslims are those who have broken the psychological and social barriers that so often stand in the way of an individual implementing these directives from Allah (ﷻ). It is in executive *āyāt* such as these that Allah (ﷻ) tells all listening Muslims what He expects them to do in their uphill struggle to bring Allah’s (ﷻ) words into man’s real life and to raise man’s mundane life to meet the standard of Allah (ﷻ). Here Allah (ﷻ) tells these listening covenant bearers that just requital or retribution is part of Allah’s (ﷻ) program for man. It is part and parcel of His *dīn*.

The basis of this divinely-ordained legal code for cases of premeditated murder is a life for a life. This *āyah* addresses the prevalent attitude and its cultural context in the *jāhiliyah*, which would try to redress a murder by seeking disproportionate retribution. That is to say, if a slave of one faction (tribe, clan, family, etc.) was killed by another faction, the wronged faction would seek to take revenge by insisting on killing a free man. Or if a woman was killed, the life of a man would be demanded in retribution. Among the consequences of this attitude was the tendency toward devastating and worsening hostilities between factions with ever-increasing recriminations. This lesson limits the requital that could be sought and demanded.

This *āyah* also spares the Muslims the legalistic inevitability of strict capital punishment, which seems to have been the Judaic understanding of the time, based on Chapter 19 in the Book of Exodus and Chapter 20 of Deuteronomy in the Bible. It also spares the Muslims the reaction of the “Christians” to Jewish legalism that views “a life for a life” as an imperative that need not be taken lit-

erally. Thus, according to this Christian reaction, paying a fine or imprisonment would be more in spirit with “tolerance,” “turning the other cheek,” and “amnesty,” even though no foundation for such penalties is found in the New Testament.

When the Qur’an was revealed, about 1,400 years ago, how did societies deal with a killer or a murderer? The Jews had their death sentence. Christians, by and large, felt more comfortable with blood-money, a compensation paid to the victim’s next-of-kin. In the *jāhiliyah* of pre-Qur’anic Arabia, it was established tradition that murder be settled by revenge. Often, this could result in a spiral of retribution and counter-retribution that could degenerate into random acts of violence claiming numerous lives besides that of the original murderer. Some tribes would even want to kill ten for one of their own, or to kill a man for a woman of their own, or a free man for a serf of their own. Clan wars and blood feuds lasting over generations often originated from such disproportionate vengeance.

Readers of the Qur’an will find that its “punishment” is not as inflexible as the Jewish understanding of the Bible, nor as loose as the Christians’ interpretation. The Qur’an’s concept of *qiṣāṣ* (just requital) is also a marked departure from the Arabian *jāhili* traditions of revenge, vendettas, and retaliations, which may have suited the harsh and inclement nature of the Arabian nomads. The original teachings of the Torah sought to take the sting out of revenge killings, a characteristic of almost all primitive societies, Hebrew and Arabian alike, by addressing the criminal and holding him accountable for murder, homicide, or manslaughter.

This punishment authorized by Allah (ﷻ), *qiṣāṣ*, is not necessarily mandatory capital punishment, as the *āyah* goes on to explain. Capital punishment is defined as the execution of a criminal by the state or some other *public* authority. That executions have public authority is crucial; executions carried out by vigilantes or lynch mobs cannot be regarded as capital punishment. In the West, killing criminals without public authority is tantamount to murder. Thus any theological evaluation of capital punishment relies, in the Judeo-Christian West, on a theological analysis of the

nature and possibility of civil authority, which becomes problematic in light of the ill-defined relationship between Church and State through their peculiar history.

Under what circumstances, if any, therefore, may Christians or Jews execute their fellow human beings? When, if ever, should the Church grant the State authority to carry out executions? As one would expect of a people who have not persevered with the revealed word of God, the Church holds ambiguous and contradictory positions on these matters. The early Church condemned Christian participation in capital punishment, “The just man, whose task it is to administer justice, is not permitted even to charge anyone with a capital crime, since it makes no difference whether one kills with words or with the sword: killing as such is forbidden.”¹²⁶ With its history written in the blood of its many martyrs, the early Church clearly recognized that allegiance to Christ was incompatible with the Roman Empire’s interest in executing its dissenters, be they “political,” “religious,” or “criminal.”

By the beginning of the fifth century, the Church had largely come to accept the traditional penal practices of the Roman Empire, by then nominally Christian. However, remnants of early Church practice and discipline continued. In the ninth century Pope Nicholas I wrote about the newly converted Bulgars (Turks), saying, “you must give up your former habits and not merely avoid every occasion of taking life... You should save from death not only the innocent but also criminals, because Christ has saved you from the death of the soul.”¹²⁷

Similarly, today, clerics continue to be prohibited from any involvement in capital sentences, since they

...are chosen for the service of the altar where the passion of the slain Christ is represented — that Christ who, as Peter expressed it, “When reviled he did not revile in return.” It is, therefore, not fitting that clerics should strike or kill, for servants should imitate the master... second... clerics are entrusted with the ministry of the New Law which lays down no capital or corporal

penalty. To qualify as *ministers of the new covenant*, therefore, they should abstain from such actions.”¹²⁸

This prohibition continues to the present in Roman Catholic Canon Law, which bars from priestly ordination anyone who has been involved as judge or executioner in the carrying out of the death penalty.

The critical scriptural question with respect to the legitimacy of capital punishment is how Christians are to understand the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Many Christians who advocate capital punishment acknowledge that the person and work of Christ are primary and that the Hebrew Bible must be read in light of the New Testament, but in practice they take the Hebrew Bible as their moral benchmark. Thus it is argued that capital punishment is commanded in Genesis, 9:6¹²⁹ and that the Mosaic law extends this, demanding capital punishment for a variety of offenses within the covenant community of Israel, including striking or cursing one’s parent, kidnapping, allowing one’s ox to kill another person, sorcery, bestiality, idolatry, adultery, wizardry, rebellious sons, and non-virginal brides-to-be.¹³⁰

Advocates further argue that the New Testament generally reinforces the Hebrew Bible on the question of capital punishment. St. Paul is understood to affirm that governing authorities have the right to punish offenders (Romans, 13:1–4). As for Jesus (ﷺ), according to this confusing history, his commands to turn the other cheek, walk the second mile, and give up one’s coat and cloak are meant to guide the Church, but they are not intended to do away with the natural laws of society.

The ultimate difficulty for Christians who advocate capital punishment while acknowledging that they should live under the New Covenant is that they deny the efficacy of Christ’s (supposed) death upon the cross. If capital punishment is still needed to expiate the guilt of the individual, then Christ’s crucifixion fails in its ultimate purpose. For this reason, other Christians believe that if Jesus Christ (ﷺ) is Lord, then Christ’s commands must be obeyed in the private and public realms. Christians are to love God and their

neighbor, including their enemy. These Christians believe that the cross of Christ does away with all expiation and retribution, for Christ replaces the law of retribution with the law of reconciliation (Matthew, 5:23–4). According to them, Jesus' (ﷺ) pardon of the woman caught for adultery, a civil offense requiring capital punishment under the old Mosaic law, is not merely an isolated example of mercy; rather, Jesus (ﷺ) is challenging the presumption that humans can ever authorize the death penalty as judge or executioner.

A very different set of presuppositions in arguments for and against capital punishment are to be found in contemporary Western liberal societies. The two most common arguments are *deterrence* and *retribution*. Deterrence is designed to protect society by preventing possible future crimes. Opponents of the death penalty argue that this “deterrent” does not work. From a sociological perspective, we are told, the death penalty has not reduced crime; nations that utilize the death penalty do not have a lower murder rate than those that do not. Secondly, there is psychological evidence suggesting that capital punishment does not, in fact, deter at all. Many murders are “crimes of passion,” thus lacking the element of “premeditation” necessary for deterrence to be effective. Thirdly, opponents of capital punishment argue, the deterrence argument could be used to justify the death penalty for lesser crimes (for example, “white collar” crimes such as stock fraud or maliciously creating computer viruses) if the penalty would deter a sufficient number of potential criminals. Executing innocents and executing persons for lesser crimes, however, goes against the sensibilities of modern liberal societies, which hold strongly to the view that only those guilty of a crime ought to be punished, and that the punishment must “fit” the crime.

Retributivism is the other standard contemporary justification for the death penalty. According to this theory, the death penalty is understood as a just punishment: an eye for an eye, a life for a life. This view is untenable for any theological viewpoint that accepts the central Christological claim of the cross representing the final expiation of sin, the “once and for all” atonement, eliminating the need or legitimacy of any bloodletting to testify to the

sacredness of life. To round out the liberal Western views on capital punishment, it would be helpful to distinguish between the variety of retributivist viewpoints.

The retributivist viewpoint is often understood as simply giving someone what he deserves, given the positive laws of the society.¹³¹ All citizens in the society know that if anyone breaks a particular law, a particular punishment follows. If society respects that person's humanity, to treat the person as a responsible actor, it is necessary to impose the prescribed punishment. The major Christian theological problem with this view is that it assumes the justness of the positive laws of society. Aquinas would say that Christians have a theological perspective from which they can critique secular laws and secular punishments as potentially unjust.

The *payment theory* is an attempt to justify more deeply the appropriateness of capital punishment. As restitution for theft involves giving up the stolen property, so restitution for murder involves giving up one's own life. Opponents of this theory argue that this analogy is problematic. Retribution is not the same as restitution. The murderer is unable to return or restore what the murderer has "taken;" executing the murderer does not bring the victim back to life.

The *satisfaction theory* holds that the suffering of the offender should match that of the victim. Traditionally, *satisfaction* assuaged the desire for revenge, and societies punished offenders to keep friends and relatives from taking revenge on the offender or the offender's family, tribe, etc. However, to the extent that punishment is exacted on such grounds, the rationale is more akin to deterrence than retribution, in that the primary goal is social stability rather than the proper retributive punishment.

The *satisfaction* viewpoint finds its strongest modern spokesperson in Immanuel Kant, who argued that murderers must be executed so that "blood-guilt" will not be fixed on the society.¹³² Kant appeals to the Hebrew Bible's notions of sacrifice and placation. Sins require sacrifices. The spilling of one person's blood requires the spilling of the murderer's blood. This is required if God's anger is to be placated.

Many contemporary proponents of capital punishment accept versions of Kant's argument. Since the 1990s capital punishment has been growing in frequency in the United States. When friends and relatives of victims are interviewed, they regularly claim that they cannot rest easy until the murderer has been executed and thus consider the endless sets of appeals a horrible ordeal for them to be put through.

Opponents of the death penalty argue that the need to *satisfy* the death of a loved one by executing the murderer is a learned response and that much of the frustration and restlessness felt by victims' families is created by the drawn-out — 10 to 12 years — delays in final sentencing. They point out that in countries which do not have a death penalty statute in place and where life sentences are handed down relatively quickly, relatives are much less likely to express a desire for a capital sentence. Moreover, these opponents suggest that such desires for revenge and expiation, while understandable, can be challenged on theological and scriptural grounds.

Whatever reasons are advanced to favor capital punishment, all such appeals embody the desire for revenge. Although liberal societies do not generally acknowledge the desire for vengeance, the death penalty is undoubtedly a means by which society institutionalizes its revulsion at particularly heinous crimes, and also a means of re-establishing a social, or even cosmic, order that was broken by the criminal.

Once the appeal of capital punishment is understood as thinly-veiled vengeance, the necessity of Christian opposition to capital punishment becomes clear. Christian theological objections to capital punishment begin with the claim that all life, guilty or not, belongs to God. In the cross of Christ, all demands by God of sacrifice for sin has been ended. As the Church cannot execute sinners because of the call to forgive, Christians should seek the same for those who violate the law in the wider society. Armed with this type of theological rationale, Christians join secularists in public debate against capital punishment. Both may rejoice that people are no longer put to death for crimes such as forgery and theft, and

continue to advocate the elimination of capital punishment wherever the practice continues.

Christians cannot expect to come to any widespread agreement about the immorality of capital punishment as long as they fail to agree that the retributive theory of punishment in general cannot be sustained theologically. If Christians are committed to forgiveness and reconciliation, then they must believe that retributive forms of punishment so prevalent in modern Western societies are a profound distortion of the Gospel.

In the Jewish canonical Bible the main offenses for which the law decrees capital punishment are murder, certain sexual crimes, blasphemy, idolatry, Sabbath desecration, witchcraft, kidnapping, and dishonor of parents. According to Talmudic law there can be no capital conviction unless two eyewitnesses testify to the crime. The perpetrator must also have been warned concerning the crime. Only a court of 23 judges is permitted to try cases where the punishment is death. The Bible mentions only three types of capital punishment: stoning, burning, and slaying with the sword. Rabbinic law finds a biblical basis for a fourth, strangulation. This last method was applied in all cases where the mode of capital punishment is not specifically prescribed in the Bible. The manner of burning was a matter of dispute between the Sadducees and Pharisees. Stoning primarily involved the act of throwing the convicted person from a high enough elevation. Capital punishment in general was only rarely carried out and was suspended under Roman rule for some time. Later, many rabbis advocated its total abolition. Nevertheless, it was known even in the Middle Ages. In modern Israel, the illegitimate Zionist State, capital punishment has been abolished in all cases except for genocide and treason in time of war.

The above “walk-through” of the ups and downs in Judeo-Christian history should prove to Muslims how disturbed, unstable, and erratic the followers of earlier scripture are as they — throughout the ages — have lost faith in God’s words, His judgement, and His solution to human problems. This Judeo-Christian failure to implement biblical laws and morality is an indication that humans

who have lost touch with God are incapable of seeing to it that His commands and will are implemented here on earth and now in our lifetime. It is not, as the bleeding heart liberals would like us to believe, that God is cruel in His punishments. And it is not that humans care for and love humans more than God cares for and loves them! It is simply the human failure of determination that comes from a disintegrated relationship with God that man cannot release a criminal's soul from his gravely errant body to be resurrected with the hope of salvation in the name of God!

Jews and Christians pretend to love man more than God does by suspending capital punishment. Jews and Christians advance a humanistic argument to lock up a serial killer for the rest of his earthly life instead of sending him on to his Maker with the trust that he will be received by a Merciful Creator. Jews and Christians neglect obvious and frank words of the Bible such as “an eye for an eye... and a life for a life” and turn around to argue and “reason” against God's unequivocal words of scripture to say that these rules and laws are outdated or irrelevant. When these “people of previous scripture” do all this to abandon, forsake, and trivialize God, then it becomes all the more our duty to stand for Allah's (ﷻ) covenant, to merge with Allah (ﷻ), and to do His will.

By now, it should be quite evident that all the arguments posed by Western civilization — ancient and current — do not focus at all on the issue of justice. In the Qur'an, however, the goal of any form of *qiṣāṣ* is social justice and the above *āyah* confirms this imperative, **“O you who are secure in your covenant [with Allah]! Just retribution is decreed for you in cases of murder...”**

To prove a point, it would be nice to have reliable crime statistics, and as a matter of fact, worldwide crime related data has been tabulated by various agencies, not the least of which is the United Nations. However, according to those who collect and maintain this data, reliable crime statistics and correlations between the rate of crime (murder, rape, assault, robbery) and the utility of the death penalty in a particular country are compromised by certain caveats, two of which are the nonexistence of data and the assertion that crime statistics are often better indicators of

prevalence of law enforcement and willingness to report crime, than actual prevalence of crime itself. In this context, therefore, to try to draw conclusions from data that the United States has the highest per capita prison population in the world (715 per 100,000) or that the Islamic Republic of Iran executed 317 people last year, second only to China, would be futile.¹³³

As a result, we will be forced to rely on heuristic (data-lacking) experiences and considerations to compare societies who do have the death penalty with those who do not have it in so far as an assessment of its impact on the rate of crime. Is there a higher percentage of murders and homicides in areas of the world that are Islamic by tradition or in areas that are Judeo-Christian by choice, even though the Judeo-Christian script has been thrown out of the window and liberalism has replaced it as their religion supreme? Where does a person feel more secure to walk in the middle of the night? Is it the streets of Cairo or the streets of Washington, DC? The answer is obvious: it is Cairo. Even though Cairo is not in a legal and political sense an Islamic place; its relatively secure ambiance is due to the residual effects of what used to be an Islamic society with its prevalent norms.

The above *āyah* in the Qur'an does not coerce Muslims into a mandatory death sentence for a convicted murderer. The *āyah* besides outlining the just penalty for a murderer, the death sentence, goes on to state that if blood-money is acceptable in lieu of the death sentence, it should be offered and that compensation should be fair.

This *āyah* is a transitional *āyah* that is meant to circumscribe the revenge and blood feud instinct, which is the norm of impulsive societies. It says in effect that a victim's avenger cannot go on a killing spree and indiscriminately kill with all disproportion and without any regard for justice because he lost a dear one to some criminal's bullet. Justice is required in the implementation of this *qiṣāṣ*. No one is permitted to kill many because some were killed. No one may kill promiscuously, gratuitously, and arbitrarily. The murderer has to be identified and no one belonging to his family, race, or nationality should be the target of retaliation and vengeance.

After stating that a financial or monetary compensation to be paid to the victim's near of kin by the (extended) family of the perpetrator, the *āyah* states that this transaction should be done in a facilitated way without impossible conditions and impractical terms on behalf of the victim's kinsmen, and without any foot-dragging from the perpetrator's side. When the maturity, consciousness, and experience of the early Islamic community grew over the years, when they were ready to make the leap beyond perpetual cycles of inter-tribal vengeance, and when they were ready to concentrate on their higher responsibilities, Allah (ﷻ), later on, allowed this emerging consolidated Muslim Ummah another option, **“...and paying an indemnity to the victim's relatives, unless they forgo it by way of *ṣadaqah*” (4:92).**

This paying of an indemnity is not to be found in previous Jewish legalism. The murdered person's relatives had only one choice: the death penalty. At the other extreme “Christians” are expected to love and forgive without the death sentence and without payment for psychological grief and damage (indemnity). This is precisely what happens when people are no longer in fervent contact with God. They can be easily identified by their extreme positions, both of which are not workable — as they would come to realize after hundreds of years of head-bumping and blind-alley chasing. That is why both Jews and Christians have adopted the humanistic and liberal way out by agreeing to suspend capital punishment. But even in so doing, they are not sure of themselves and they are now toying with the idea of reintroducing capital punishment into their societies, as is the obvious trend in a growing number of states in the USA. And still when they do apply the death penalty, as they are doing now in these limited states, they do not leave the option of amnesty open, with possible monetary compensation to be paid from the perpetrator's side to the victim's side.

The hindsight benefits of *qiṣāṣ* are that it provides society with a standard of social stability. It decelerates an otherwise rising trend of murders and homicides. It serves to retard the attitude of aggression because a murderer knows that if he kills he will face the death penalty. The potential killer figures out that by refraining from the

act of murder he saves two lives: the victim's life and his own life. This god-given penalty of *qiṣāṣ* inhibits a social outbreak of crimes, lawbreaking, and mass misbehavior. Criminality is reduced to its tightest confines. *Qiṣāṣ* also offers satisfaction to the aggrieved party, the victim's immediate family, for their loss. It defuses at a deep psychological level the human penchant for hate, evil, and raw revenge.

Note that the *āyah* did not spell out the amount for an indemnity. This is because human societies from time to time and from place to place are in an economic flux. There are some societies that are poor and others that are rich. And within every society there are strands of affluence and as well as strands of impoverishment. And this is where human reasoning (*ijtihād*) is required to assess what is within the range of acceptability between both sides that would constitute a *dīyah* (blood-money) making it possible for both sides to resume social discourse.

O you who are securely committed [to Allah]! Ordained upon you is the law of penalization [in cases] of murder: a free [person] for a free [person], an indentured [person] for an indentured [person], and a female for a female. But then if his brother [the aggrieved] pardons him [the felon] then standards of the common good should be followed and restitution should be delivered prototypically. This becomes an easing of the burden [granted to you] by your Sustainer. But whoever aggresses after this will have severe affliction. And in this penalization you have life, O you of core ideas, so that you may stay guarded [against Allah] (2:178–179).

Allah (ﷻ) chooses His words very carefully. The responsibility of carrying out the death penalty becomes one that is divinely assigned to *al-ladhīna āmanū* (those who are secure in their covenant attachment to Allah (ﷻ) by faith and reason). Aforementioned, there are humanistic, secular, liberal, legal, and “religious” arguments against the death penalty when it comes to

murderers, killers, and manslayers. Human beings present themselves — venally and hypocritically — as more caring and loving of other human beings than Allah (ﷻ) Himself. Maybe the discarding of the death penalty from their societies could be viewed as a symptom of the failure of secular human legislative, philosophical, and legal systems.

However, the responsibility to terminate someone's life, even if he is a guilty murderer, is not to be taken lightly, and for this reason it cannot be entrusted to today's traditional and ceremonial Islamic societies. The responsibility for executing the death penalty is lodged with *al-ladhina āmanū*. This capital punishment does not mean that Muslims become machines and robots in applying this penalty when it is applicable. Nor does it mean that it is the only form of punishment acceptable to do justice to the aggrieved party or *'uṣbah* (the victim's next of kin). This *āyah* appropriately ends with the word *tattaqūn* (guard against Allah's (ﷻ) power). Who else should anyone be thinking about, what other power is there to contemplate when all attention should be on the power of Allah (ﷻ) that permits life to come into existence and then allows a life to depart from existence, under natural circumstances and in the social circumstances of man's behavior and intention?

The heavenly law in this *āyah* becomes man's earthly responsibility. When retribution is done on behalf of the fatality — when the aggrieved will accept no other option — a free person corresponds to his like, a less than free person to his like, and a female person to a female person.

But if a reduction of penalty is forthcoming from his brother [the plaintiff], then pursue the common good and deliver [what is due of the reduced] penalty aright (2:178).

This penalty reduction means that the victim's next of kin will accept compensatory damages (financial/monetary disbursement) as an act of exempting the killer from the death sentence. Once the next of kin accepts this offer, they should receive their compensa-

tion with satisfaction, accommodation, and in a spirit of reconciliation. As for the killer, he or his next of kin should pay out the agreed-upon compensation likewise: with full measure, conscientiousness, and precision. With this mutual exchange of behavior, both sides, of the victim as well as the criminal, are psychologically cleansed of emotional hurt and mental disarray. This helps rearrange the social dynamics in a healthy way that contributes to the well-being of the public order.

From Allah (ﷻ) to the bearers of the final Scripture, this compensatory option is yet another parting privilege away from the literal, legalistic, and mechanical application of divine law that became the scriptural hallmark of Banū Isrā'il. This extra legal latitude is truly a form of “emptying the gun barrels” and opening the human experience to its more tolerant potential, **“...which is a relief from your Sustainer and [an act of] mercy.”**

“But whoever aggresses after that shall encounter severe affliction.” This means whoever returns to the act of killing will be painfully punished in the life to come and will also face the executioner in his earthly life. No more will any *diyyah* be accepted. When this individual repeats his act of senseless killing, that means he has failed to honor his word to show reconciliation and good faith. He not only kills another person but also kills the ability in himself to live peacefully with others and have others live peacefully with him. This also means that there is an individual in society who is capable of polarizing families, clans, and communities by spilling innocent blood and agitating the instincts of blood revenge. Once the victim's next of kin accept, in good faith, reconciliation, they too are not expected to slip into a blood vendetta if the killer comes back and again murders an innocent one of them. Therefore, the Islamic state authority would have to step in, in light of this *āyah*, and do justice by applying the death penalty to this irredeemable individual.

With this type of resilience, balance, and fairness presented to the human society through this impeccable Qur'an, why is the public mind filled with innuendos and accusations against the Qur'an and Islam? These Qur'anic moral laws have predated the futile and

sometimes disingenuous arguments against the death penalty. To the committed Muslims, this means they should note a few dynamics at work. Firstly, Muslims themselves have become their own contradiction. They, in theory, have the best laws in the Book and on the books, but they fail to understand them and thereby fail to apply them. They fail to understand them because up until now with a very few exceptions, Muslims have not developed the logic to respond to the voices that have coalesced to outlaw what Allah (ﷻ) has made lawful — in this case, the death sentence pertaining to premeditated murder. They fail to apply these divine laws because they are intellectually second fiddle to secular governments that are not interested in what God had to say about murder 1,400 or 2,000 or even 3,000 years ago. And if they do apply the death penalty as they currently, but selectively, do in Saudi Arabia, it is done in an Israeli style: literally, legalistically, mechanically, and hypocritically. They chop off the hand of a petty thief but they bless the hand of the royal thief; they lop off the head of a nickel-and-dime criminal but they kiss the heads of “highborn” princes and kings.

Secondly, Muslims cannot afford to obliquely assume that a scholastically and technologically advanced civilization — which has placed men in space, has numerous think tanks, and made entire libraries available to a user from his desktop — has unwittingly failed to identify the merits of this Qur’an. The least that can be said in a sincere assessment of Western civilization is that there has been a failure of conscience by the West to publically confess to the superb quality of this final Scripture even though their minds tell them so. “Them” are the people who have dedicated their lives to studying or attempting to understand the meanings of this heavenly Book.

In this context, everyone knows — Muslim or otherwise — that revenge and retaliation, an action taken in return for injury or offense, is both instinctual and natural. Thus, Islam accounts for this god-given human predisposition. The response in the social realm of things is the law of *qiṣāṣ* (redress and punishment). This type of strict and uncompromising justice curtails the human incli-

nation to commit crimes and dampens rage, which is a fallout to certain crimes. It also serves to repel the criminal and blood-guilty from further acts of crime.

But at the same time Islam encourages acts of amnesty and remission. When the holy Writ encourages this act of amnesty by the aggrieved party it does so from a position of superiority because the death penalty is authorized, but voluntary acceptance of restitution is even better. It is not mandatory to do so; but if it is within the tolerance range of some individuals, then by all means let it be so. The closer we read this Book of books we realize more and more that the words are not coming from some philosopher, scholar, or guru. They are coming from the source who knows human nature very well, as that source is the Creator of humans, life, and possibilities. And this *legal āyah* is a defining moment at the juncture of human possibilities in light of heavenly supervision: execution or restitution.

Some Islamic historical narratives indicate that this *āyah* has been superseded by another *āyah*, which in the chronological order of revelation followed this one. That *āyah*, in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, states, **“And We ordained for them in that [Torah]: a life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth...” (5:45).**

At this juncture it may appear as if there is a contradiction between these two *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and the one from *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*. But the contexts are different. The *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* speaks about lives that are lost when two blocs of people feud, fight, and kill. No particular individual in one camp of people (family, tribe, clan, etc.) is known to have killed another particular individual in another camp of people. But the *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* speaks specifically to the instance of a known killer who is responsible for slaying a known victim. In this case, there are a new set of issues presenting a new set of laws.

This demanding *āyah* concludes with the sentence, **“And in the law of retribution there is life for you who are of core thoughts, so that you may be on guard [against Allah’s retribution].”** This law of retribution is not for revenge. It is not revealed

by Allah (ﷻ) to man to satisfy some bad feelings. This law is above and beyond such human notions. This law of justice from on high is for the purpose of preserving life, and for man to work with the will of Allah (ﷻ), gaining the quality of *taqwá* in the process.

The way this penalty flows in the life of society is that it forces a potential killer to think many times and to hesitate before he embarks on the criminal act of taking someone else's life; because he knows very well that he risks losing his own life if the law catches up with him. This enforced law of just retribution will also cause the aggrieved and brokenhearted next-of-kin to withhold their feelings for "killing back" as they know clearly that the killer now faces the death sentence. Therefore, this death sentence law of requital neutralizes the root cause of vendettas, blood-feuds, and revenge killings. In nomadic or rural undeveloped societies this blood rivalry has the potential of lasting for generations. As a case in point in pre-Islamic Arabia, a blood-feud known as Ḥarb al-Basūs (the Basūs War) engulfed the Arabian nomads in warfare for 40 years.

In another meaning, this law of *qiṣāṣ* preserves life in the generic sense. To assault one person's life is tantamount to an assault on the common life of people themselves. Life in this respect is a common denominator; and an elimination of one life is a contempt for all life. All other living humans share in the loss of a victim's life. If this *qiṣāṣ* halts a potential murderer from taking someone's life it in effect halts him from diminishing the larger common life of all. This law of *qiṣāṣ* in a sense upholds not only the potential victim's life, or that family's life, or that community's life, but it also upholds the genre of life itself. That is why Allah's (ﷻ) words are, **"And you do have in *qiṣāṣ*, life..."**

All of this responsibility in putting the death sentence on the legislative books is to feed back into the Islamic psychological profile of *taqwá*. It is this certitude that Muslims have about their own scripture that gives them the confidence to stand for capital punishment, the death sentence, and just executions provided the evidence is there and an innocent person has been killed with premeditation. Likewise, the lack of certainty by "Christians" and

“Jews” in their own scriptures that have them develop and present elaborate and unending arguments about how cruel and inhumane it is to take away another person’s life when that other person is a proven killer and murderer. This is part of the psychology that is at work in the perpetual depredations of the dispossessed people of the world by Western imperialists and colonizing occupiers. They violate every human principle, killing and displacing millions in the process, and then claim that bringing proven war criminals to justice via the death penalty is cruel and inhumane.

This law of *qiṣāṣ* stops people from committing acts of murder in an increasing manner as we now witness in societies where there is no death sentence. *Qiṣāṣ* also puts an end to the cycle of violent and bloody reprisals that would otherwise become prevalent in many societies in the absence of such a law, when families and clans want to take revenge for their deceased. Nothing can enforce this law of *qiṣāṣ* except for the quality of *taqwá* within a person who knows that Allah (ﷻ) loves people more than they love themselves, and that Allah (ﷻ) cares for people more than they care for themselves, and that Allah (ﷻ) is concerned with justice more than people are concerned with it, and that Allah (ﷻ) knows how to pronounce the death penalty, corresponding to the gravity of the crime, more than the best legal scholars ever to walk the earth.

It is this *taqwá* that gives meaning to laws and regulations. Laws are cruel and laws are vicious in the absence of the human quality of *taqwá*. *Taqwá* is the difference between a death sentence in secular society where law enforcement institutions have no compassion in them and the Islamic moral code where even a person who paid with his life for a capital crime was returned to a merciful, caring, and just Lord. Without *taqwá*, positive laws and their enabling institutions are insensitive; they are enacted and built with no higher authority in mind, and they are based on the faulty premise that man by himself knows it all.

This quality of practical *taqwá* would explain why such heinous crimes as killing and homicide were a rarity during the time of the final Prophet (ﷺ), as well as his sanctioned successors. Such crimes when they did occur were accompanied by the volun-

tary confession of the perpetrator. Why? Because *taqwá* was a fact of life. It was not some unknowable and ambiguous word like *piety* is today. *Taqwá* acted as the motor of the conscience, deep down inside the recesses of the heart. Corresponding to *taqwá* on the outside and entrenched inside the public social order was the Shari‘ah. In this interplay between the internal voice of *taqwá* and the external representation of Shari‘ah, the foundations and institutions of society were free of notions of cruelty, savagery, and inhuman treatment that are reviled nowadays by human rights organizations. And this is as it should be, because no longer is there a societal complement of *taqwá* that raises conventional laws and judicial processes from pro forma procedures to the level of binding statutes that belong to a loving, caring, and compassionate Sustainer. And so within this momentum of *taqwá*, the real court is not that stone and brick building on main street in downtown metropolis; it is that throbbing and Allah-fearing heart in the human conscience of a man who is honored by Allah (ﷻ).

In this “inside world” of *taqwá* centeredness once a human commits a crime far away from the incrimination of courts and the presentation of hard evidence, when no one can prove his guilt, there is his internal *taqwá* that turns his conscience into a knot of shame. He feels the sting of his conscience twinging and pricking him. This becomes so unbearable that the person himself has to confess to his errant (criminal) behavior. In doing so he voluntarily walks to the material court of earth after making his decision in the spiritual court of self. And when the physical penalty comes — if it does — it is least irritating and even pleasing compared to the nightmare of having to live with the annoyance and suffering of knowing the he committed a crime. In such a manner does a human evade Allah’s (ﷻ) anger and hopes for His eternal reward of redemption in the coming life. This is the depth of *taqwá*; it is the nature of *taqwá*; and it is the consequence of *taqwá*.

Waṣīyah Is a Means of Consolidating Extended Family

This legislation of the death penalty by Allah (ﷻ) is followed by legislating man's last will and testament. The common factor between the previous *āyah* and this one is the obvious transition of what is moral into what is legal.

It is ordained for you, when death approaches any of you and he is leaving behind much wealth, to make bequests in favor of his parents and [other] near of kin in accordance with what is fair: this is binding on all who are *muttaqī*. And if anyone alters such a provision after coming to know it, the sin of acting thus shall fall only upon those who have altered it. Verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. If, however, one has reason to fear that the testator has committed a mistake or a [deliberate] wrong, and thereupon brings about a settlement between the heirs, he will incur no sin [thereby]. Verily, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace (2:180–182).

The *qīṣāṣ* and this *waṣīyah* have something in common: they both regulate family relations. In the case of *qīṣāṣ*, inter-family relations are diffused from tensions and wars of revenge. In the case of *waṣīyah* (last will and testament), intra-family relations are made easier by balancing the distribution of the deceased's wealth. Both *qīṣāṣ* and *waṣīyah* are obligations that nurture healthy family relations and dealings.

This last will and testament is channeled to parents and near relatives when the deceased person leaves behind considerable wealth. What precisely constitutes *considerable wealth* (*khayr*)? The scholarly literature (*fiqhī* opinions) vary. It appears the definition is context specific as social norms, economic conditions, and situational details are contributing factors in associating *considerable wealth* with a specific value. Some *mujtahids* and *faqīhs* say that a minimum sum of money left behind by a dead person, which would qualify as *considerable wealth*, should be no less than 60 *dinārs*.

Others said 80, and yet others, 400 *dinārs*. And still others placed the minimum amount that could be characterized as *considerable wealth* at 1,000 *dinārs*.

A Makkan *dinār* weighed the equivalent of 228 *dirhams* during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ).¹³⁴ A modern equivalent to an original Makkan *dinār* would be about 4.25 grams of gold. Therefore, according to the traditional *ijtihād*, around 425 grams of gold, or one pound, would be regarded as *considerable wealth*. The going rate for one ounce of gold nowadays is about \$960;¹³⁵ that makes the price of a pound of gold about \$15,360. And if we were to transfer *ijtihāds* of about 1,000 years ago to our present day, an amount of \$15,360, especially in the recent climate of crashing Western economies, would certainly qualify as *considerable wealth*!

The pertinent question here is: should contemporary Muslim scholars factor in standard-of-living variations (inflation, currency liquidity, the abandoning of gold as the standard (reserve) monetary unit, current United Nations definitions of the “poverty” level, etc.) for our contemporary times in order to come up with a figure for *considerable wealth*? Or would an equitable and just Islamic society in our time, when wealth is redistributed through the moral and legal processes of *ṣadaqah*, *zakāh*, *infāq*, and other ways and means, find itself returning to the standard of old when a simple sum equivalent to a pound of gold was regarded as *considerable wealth*?

The *āyāt* of *wirāthah* (inheritance) outlined in the ensuing *sūrah*s of the Qur’an were revealed after this one. In these later *āyāt*, specific shares are allocated and the apportioned amounts to parents and relatives of the deceased are spelled out along the general rule: a male’s share is equivalent to the share of two females. Besides, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported on good authority of narration to have said, “Indeed, Allah has given each who deserves his/her right. As such, a will [of inheritance] is not due to an inheritor.”¹³⁶

As for the relatives who are not mentioned in the *āyāt* of inheritance, these relatives may be included in the broad meaning of the present *āyah*, “**It is ordained for you, when death approaches any of you and he is leaving behind much wealth, to make bequests...**” The apparent reason for including those individuals,

who are not within the circle of inheritors identified in other *sūrah*s, in this last will and testament is to consolidate extended family ties. The *āyāt* of inheritance specify the family members who are entitled to shares in the deceased's wealth. But there may be relatives, who are excluded from the mandatory distribution of inheritance, but who qualify for a discretionary proportion. This would serve as a form of broad family solidarity.

Bearing that in mind the *āyah* mentions **“what is fair”** and **“binding on the *muttaqīs*.”** With this synthesis between immediate family members (inheritors) and extended family members (potential inheritors), the Book of Allah (ﷻ) has once again linked the moral with the legal, resulting in family solidarity and enhanced cordial relations within the kinfolk. The inheritors are not slighted and the non-inheritors are not neglected.

Taqwá extends the reach of a nuclear family and tries to bring into its fold extended family relatives. All this being the case, the Sunnah has limited the *waṣīyah* to a third of the estate, no more; one-fourth is preferable. This is to make sure that those who legally inherit are not wronged by those who are not in the strict sense inheritors. The *waṣīyah* is contingent on the moral quality of the deceased and the reciprocal legal accommodation of the Islamic law, as is the case with all social regulations of Islam. There ought be no conflict and no bad feeling ensuing from this arrangement.

Whoever is party to the dictation of the *waṣīyah* and then changes it after the death is culpable, **“And if anyone alters such a provision after coming to know it, the sin of acting thus shall fall only upon those who have altered it. Verily, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”** Is it not clear now why Allah (ﷻ) ends this *āyah* with His absolute attributes: All-Hearing, All-Knowing? These words go straight to the *taqwá* capacity in man and enrich his conscience with the realization that everything is monitored by Allah (ﷻ). The deceased dies, but Allah (ﷻ) does not die. Even though the deceased cannot hear or see what others are doing to his will or last testament after he departs this life, Allah (ﷻ) is All-Hearing and All-Knowing.

There is one exception to this dictated *waṣīyah*. Changes can be made in one case. When it is ascertained that the deceased dictated his will with bias, or a prejudice against a legal inheritor, then the *waṣīyah* may be altered in order to correct the bias or prejudice, so that it becomes more just to all parties concerned,

If, however, one has reason to fear that the testator has committed a mistake or a [deliberate] wrong, and thereupon brings about a settlement between the heirs, he will incur no sin [thereby]. Verily, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace (2:182).

The matter of inheritance being a moral one before it is a legal one, Allah's (ﷻ) presence in man's heart and at the heart of this affair is the only element that promises equity and candor. And Allah's (ﷻ) presence is felt through conscious *taqwá*.

Fasting: An Annual Opportunity to Build Up *Taqwá*

O you who are secure [in your covenant with Allah]! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of Allah's power: [fasting] during a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days; and [in such cases] it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make sacrifice by feeding a needy person. And whoever does more good than he is bound to do does good unto himself thereby; for to fast is to do good unto yourselves — if you but knew it.

It was the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur'an was [first] bestowed from on high as a guidance unto man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month

shall fast throughout it; but he that is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days. Allah wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship; but [He desires] that you complete the number [of days required], and that you extol Allah for His guiding you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him] (2:183–185).

And to reinforce how the inner reality corresponds to the outer reality, the moral and the legal, this stretch of *āyāt* corresponds the act of fasting (*ṣawm*) to the act of fighting (*qitāl*). In a later *āyah* (2:216), Allah (ﷻ) ordains *fighting* as a means of conforming unto Him. Here, He ordains *fasting* as a means of conforming unto Him. Such should be the mettle of this Ummah: all is done because of Allah (ﷻ), for Allah (ﷻ), and eventually by reliance on Allah (ﷻ). This Ummah has to re-establish itself at both ends of the spectrum, the innermost and the outermost, in order to resume its leading and guiding role among the peoples of the earth. This is what will re-qualify it to become a witness upon all mankind. Fasting is the moral force that fosters the growth of self-determination and willpower. It is also the catalyst for an intense intimacy with Allah (ﷻ). Simultaneously, fasting raises the concerns of man beyond his physical appetites and worldly desires. Man, during his course of fasting, defeats the push and pull of the body's cravings and lusts. During this training man prefers Allah's (ﷻ) endorsement to all other temptations.

Fasting is a way of preparing Muslims for the ups and downs of life; fasting also blunts the irrational impulses and urges within man. One of these irrational impulses is to foster an attachment for the annual Islamic ritual of fasting and Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom in prescribing it for Muslims, because of the medical and health benefits that accrue to those who are fasting, and because these scientific "underpinings" are validated by the dominant material culture. Let us not feel good about Allah's (ﷻ) command because the human power culture feels good about fasting's science. Never should we rely on science to justify the "logic" of such duties as *ṣawm*, *ṣalāh*,

and *zakāh*. The fact is that science lags behind; it is not capable of thoroughly and conclusively explaining Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom and the higher merits of physical deeds.

No doubt, with modern investigative techniques into the functioning of the human body, the number of medical discoveries concerning the benefits of fasting is ever-increasing. But we need not anxiously place a high premium on scientific observations to rationalize the advantages of *ṣawm* (fasting), because the main object of this exercise is the human spirit, its willpower, its self-control, and a better understanding of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in the world. However, at the same time, we need not go to the extreme of discarding our own human observations of the fringe benefits and physical gains of fasting. Human investigation and discovery serve to build confidence in what Allah (ﷻ) has already revealed as *ḥaqq*; and as such they are equally applicable to all of Allah's (ﷻ) other instructions that not only build our character and resolve but also contribute to our physiological improvement. Human inquiry and exploration as a means of affirming Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom helps us to integrate wholly, body and soul, into the divine program.

This act of fasting is a demanding task for those who have never practiced it. And Allah (ﷻ) is well aware of the human nature He created. He knows it will take encouragement, urging, reassurance, and motivation for these listening Muslims to undertake the act of fasting. And so Allah (ﷻ) addresses those who are entrusted with the task of leading the people, the ones who are at the front-line of Islamic responsibilities: *al-ladhīna āmanū*. The words of address remind these Allah-driven Muslims of their purpose of being. Then, by obliging them to fast for a limited number of days, He informs them that they are part of a historical continuum of scripturally obedient people. The purpose of this inspirational drill is to improve and intensify their *taqwá*. And so from here on, in order to handle even tougher responsibilities like fighting in the cause of Allah (ﷻ) and surviving the intrigue of *munāfiqs* in the ranks, their hearts will have to be transparent, sensitive, and responsive to Allah (ﷻ), “O you who are securely committed [to Allah]! Fasting is ordained for you as it was

ordained for those before you, so that you might remain sensitive [to Allah's superiority]."

This *āyah* pretty much spells it out: fasting has been decreed for the purpose of sensitizing us to Allah's (ﷻ) prowess; in other words for the purpose of *taqwá*. It is *taqwá* that makes a person fast; it is *taqwá* that compels a person to keep his fast during the day; and it is *taqwá* that is satisfied with nothing less than to live up to Allah's (ﷻ) words and wisdom. The act of fasting needs *taqwá*, and *taqwá* is generated and expanded by the act of fasting.

Allah (ﷻ) then states that this requirement of fasting is limited to a number of days: it is not lifelong and it is not perpetual. Furthermore, the sick and the travellers are exempt from fasting until they recover from their illness or complete their journey. All this is Allah's (ﷻ) way of making things easy for His subjects,

[Fasting is ordained] during a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days; and [in such cases] it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make sacrifice by feeding a needy person (2:184).

It is apparent from the words of the *āyah* that both illness and journey are used generally. Any type of illness and any type of journey is enough to exempt a person from fasting, provided that the person who is ill or the one who is travelling make up for the days missed during Ramaḍān by fasting the same number of days later. This understanding of the *āyah* blends in very well with Allah's (ﷻ) license to those who are unable physically to fulfill His commands. It is not the severity of the illness, nor the distance of the journey that releases a Muslim from the observation of the fast. It is enough for a person to be ill, whatever that illness is, or to be travelling, whatever the nature of the travel is, to break the fast, simply because Allah (ﷻ) desires the fasting Muslim to not be aggravated, "Allah wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship..."

Now, as human beings, we may never be able to fully and satisfactorily comprehend Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom in giving us an “open-ended” license to break our fast whenever we are ill or travelling. Allah (ﷻ) has not explained the reasons for this license, and there may well be factors peculiar to sickness and travel that we still do not understand. In the meantime, obedience to Allah's (ﷻ) words supersedes our incomplete comprehension of His “logic.”

Because of this leniency, some irresponsible or careless individuals may “abuse” Allah's (ﷻ) care, as if the All-Knowing and All-Hearing is unaware of their most private thoughts. They may want to wriggle out of obligations for trivial reasons; and such behavior may explain why the *faqīhs* began to place conditions and evolve definitions in so far as the “meaning” of travel and illness. But whatever scholarly effort has been exerted to generate a set of Islamic legal opinions on this issue should never be a reason to constrict what Allah (ﷻ) has expanded. No reading of these *āyāt* could imply that Allah (ﷻ) is compelling Muslims to perform these rituals; empty-minded and empty-hearted rituals deliver no benefit to anyone, least of all to Allah (ﷻ). *Taqwá* is meant to induce Muslims to perform these obligations out of a natural need to get closer to Allah (ﷻ). The core of conforming to Allah (ﷻ) is *taqwá*. Whoever is trying to run away from performing these divine services by hiding behind “licenses” or “permissions” is small anyway. A Muslim should understand first and foremost that this *dīn* is Allah's (ﷻ) and not the people's.

By providing them with reasonable license, Allah (ﷻ) once again expresses His mercy and love for His conforming servants, who could be weakened by any number of circumstances out of their control. And they should be mature enough not to abuse it. The Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged the Muslims to use, not abuse, these licenses. But if Muslims deteriorate to such a degree that they are no longer willing to observe the dictates of *taqwá*, then a hard-headed recourse to “strict” laws will never compensate for that lost or absent quality of *taqwá*. The only way to rehabilitate these types of Muslims is to revive the *taqwá* within them.

However, this does not mean that laws are unnecessary; on the contrary, they are needed to protect Islamic civil order. Laws are to be enforced vigorously in the domain of social or civic interaction. Legal devices in Islamic social order help to deter crime and limit access to all means that lead to civil wrongs and law-breaking (*sadd al-dharā'i'*). But with acts of devotion, the issue is no longer about civic interaction. Rituals or *sha'ā'ir* are strictly speaking an affair between a conforming subject (*'abd*) and his Sovereign. In this one-on-one relationship there is no immediate consequence upon which the public interest hinges, as is the case with affairs of community, society, or state. In the latter the implementation of law is of obvious and immediate benefit to the overall well-being of the Islamic social order. But the imposition of laws and legalities to try to enforce matters relating to *taqwá* in the heart will have no benefit, and in some cases may even be counterproductive. Hence, in matters of a personal relationship with Allah (ﷻ), it is better and more in the spirit of Islam to look at ways and means to nurture, enhance, and boost the noble sense of *taqwá*. When this *taqwá* is internally strengthened, then there will be few individuals trying to use Allah's (ﷻ) license as an excuse to break the fast.

Therefore, in a society of Muslims that are collectively fasting the month of Ramaḍān, there will obviously be people breaking their fast because of a journey or travel, and others breaking their fast because of health problems. In this case, is there a capable authority who can determine what qualifies as *travel* and as *sickness*? Would it be a pilot, a navigator, or any instrument of travel? Would it be a doctor or any other medical practitioner? Would it be a person dying of cancer or any other terminal illness? Or would it be a *faqīh* who has looked at and considered the variables of both conditions? Of course all these are helpful in explaining and detailing the many variables or components, circumstances, and considerations that are within the range of *travel* and *sickness*. But the final authority must be the quality of *taqwá*. And if Allah (ﷻ) has in this *āyah* left the whole issue to confidential *taqwá* then there is nothing else to be said.

Some hadith literature will clarify how this issue was understood and practiced during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ). There were instances when people broke their fast during a journey, and others when they did not. Overall, the time frame of the Prophet (ﷺ) provides an understanding of how the first generation of Muslims dealt with the issue, long before it became a “technical” and “legalistic” *fiqhī* issue. The spirit of the first generation of Muslims is more in line with the nature of this *dīn* than the scholastic discourses of subsequent *faqīhs*. This is not meant as a slight on the *faqīhs* of Islam, who were men of knowledge and integrity; it is a comment on the official institutionalization of a particular *fiqhī* opinion that became the mainstream understanding of the Muslim masses.

It is reported on the authority of Jābir that,

*Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) left Makkah in the Year of Fath [liberation of Makkah], during the month of Ramadān. He kept his fast until he reached [a place called] Karā' al-Ghamīm. Along with him the people [Muslims] also kept their fast. Then he obtained a glass of water and raised it for all to see. Then he drank [from it.] After that he was asked, “But some people are fasting!” And he replied, “They are the wrongdoers. They are the wrongdoers.”*¹³⁷

Anas ibn Mālik reported,

*We were with the Prophet (ﷺ) on a journey. Some of us were fasting and some of us broke our fast. We reached a particular area; and that day was a hot one. The only one who had a shade was the one who had [extra] mantle to use as a cape. Some of us would raise our hands to ward off the Sun's rays. Those who were fasting lagged behind and dropped. But those who broke their fast were active. They erected the structures and they fetched the water. So the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Those who broke their fast today went off with all the reward.”*¹³⁸

Jābir also said,

The Prophet (ﷺ) was travelling. He saw a man who had a crowd of people around him. These people had inundated him. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, "What is the matter with this man?" They replied, "He is fasting." To that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "It is not a virtue to fast while travelling."¹³⁹

‘Amr ibn Umayyaḥ al-Ḍumarī said,

I approached the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) while on my journey. He said to me, "Abū Umayyaḥ, await the serving of food." I said, "O Messenger of Allah, I am fasting." He said, "So I shall inform you regarding a traveller. Allah has relieved the traveller of fasting and half of ṣalāḥ."¹⁴⁰

Anas ibn Mālik also said,

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said that Allah (ﷻ) has exempted a traveller from offering a proportion of ṣalāḥ, permitted him to break fast as He did to the breast-feeding mother and the pregnant wife if they fear for their child.¹⁴¹

Umm al-Mu’minīn ‘Ā’ishah said,

Ḥamzah ibn ‘Amr al-Aslamī asked the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) about keeping the fast while travelling. (He was one who frequently fasted.) And he replied, "If you wish then fast, but if you wish not to fast break your fast."¹⁴²

Anas ibn Mālik also said that,

...[at one time] we were travelling with the Prophet (ﷺ). Some of us were fasting but others broke their fast. As this was the case neither side was critical of the other side.¹⁴³

Abū al-Dardā' relates,

At one time we all went out with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). It was Ramaḍān and it was scorching hot. Due to the Sun's heat some of us had our hands on our head for protection. The only ones among us who were fasting were Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) and Ibn Rawāḥah...¹⁴⁴

From these references, which highlight at times the direct exhortations of the Prophet (ﷺ), it appears that breaking the fast while travelling or in sickness during Ramaḍān, as a matter of god-given permission, is not as some would think a big deal. From the evidence available, it seems likely we are encouraged to do so. As some of these examples from the Prophet's (ﷺ) practice indicate, hardship may not be a critical factor in determining what constitutes a *journey* or an *illness*. The final example above points out that at one time only the Prophet (ﷺ) and one other person in the party maintained their fast during a *journey*. This may well be because the Prophet (ﷺ) had his particular discipline from which others were exempt. He specifically disallowed the extra-long two-day fast, although he occasionally did it himself. When he was asked about this, he replied, *"I am not like you. Allah continues to feed and imbue me."*¹⁴⁵

From the first hadith quoted, it is clear the Prophet (ﷺ) broke his fast while travelling and referred to those who maintained their fast as violators, *"They are the offenders. They are the offenders."* This hadith comes from the Year of Faḥ, 8AH, which means that this hadith supersedes the others. The implication here is that some practical circumstances had to be considered. The Prophet (ﷺ) was educating and molding a new society, one that was equally conscious of the letter *and* the spirit of the law. And in this case, the letter is not compromised by the spirit; on the contrary it is ennobled by a spirit that is simultaneously compassionate, giving, and merciful. Travel at any time during the year is an inevitability, and there is no command that a Muslim should not or cannot travel during Ramaḍān; in fact, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself set out to liberate Makkah during Ramaḍān. Therefore, the last impression in this

whole affair of fasting and travelling is that it is preferable to break the fast while travelling, even if there is no severity in the journey.

As for what constitutes an *illness* that exempts one from fasting, this is a subject the *faqīhs* have dealt with in great detail. A general deduction from a synopsis of their scholarly efforts suggests that illness is open-ended. It cannot be specified by type, duration, or severity. Once again it is left to the individual's *taqwá* to determine whether a particular lack of health qualifies him to give up the fast.

In both cases, travel status and frail health, if a Muslim decides to break the fast during the month of Ramaḍān, he or she must make up for it by fasting in the coming 11 months, one day for each day missed in Ramaḍān. Whether these “make-up days” should be continuous is another fine *fiqhī* point, which this author will not go into, as it serves no purpose to take sides on equally valid *fiqhī* opinions.

There is a reason for going into so much detail. The Qur'an is making the point that personal Islamic responsibilities are a matter that can be left to the individual Muslim's heightened sense of *taqwá*. Fasting during the month of Ramaḍān or any other time of the year is a personal Islamic responsibility. This responsibility should be motivated and enforced by *taqwá*: not by a sword, a society, or a system. The only thing a system, society, and sword can do is to help provide and promote this *taqwá* on the more social aspects of life. Governments, groups, and the gallows are never a substitute for *taqwá*.

And for those who cannot bear it [fasting], it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make sacrifice by feeding a needy person. And whoever does more good than he is bound to do does good unto himself, for to fast is to do good unto yourselves — if you but knew it (2:184).

When these *āyāt* spoke to the first generation of Muslims and told them they had to fast, many initially found it very difficult. This

duty was revealed to the Muslims in the second year of the Hijrah, just before the obligation of jihad was proclaimed. During this initial period, Allah (ﷻ) gave permission to break the fast for those who found it too demanding. But then if any one of them did break the fast he would have to feed a person in need. Allah (ﷻ) advised them to feed the hungry at all times, either voluntarily by adding to what they were already providing or by giving to those who were in need even when the giver was not obliged to do so. For the first-generation Muslims and for all Muslims thereafter, it is highly recommended to exceed the minimum of feeding one person for each day of broken fast in Ramaḍān to feed two, three, four, or more for each day if possible, **“And whoever does more good than he is bound to do does good to himself...”**

The gradual training of the Muslims went on from here to encourage them to fast even if they encountered some difficulty to begin with, as long as they were not ill or travelling, **“...for to fast is to do good to yourselves — if you but knew it.”** Of course even one in the best health will experience difficulty at his initial attempt to fast, but in the longer run the benefits far outweigh the initial discomfort. This level of inconvenience is actually the first indication of the body’s desires giving way to a build-up of determination and willpower. The endurance of the committed Muslim should expand and extend. The pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) should take precedence over the pleasures of the body. There are plenty of physical advantages for a fasting Muslim, provided he is not sick, even if he experiences some discomfort and unease.

These *āyāt* imply that an able-bodied and non-migratory Muslim has to fast, as the coming *āyāt* clarify. The first exclusion in the *āyah* above for those who cannot bear the burden of fasting is overwritten by the following *āyah*. But the application of the former *āyah* remains valid for the elderly who are critically exhausted by fasting, and who will not be able to make up for it later. Imam Mālik reports that Anas ibn Mālik reached an age at which he was incapable of fasting, so he would feed the hungry. Ibn ‘Abbās says that the first *āyah* is not a *mansūkh āyah* (an *āyah* that has been updated by a following one), but that it applies to the aged.

One other point needs to be made here. By virtue of the set of characteristics singled out in this *āyah*, is there a permanent class of people in the world that is wealthy but finds it extremely difficult to finish even one fast through to the end of the day? Is Allah (ﷻ) identifying for the committed Muslim vanguard an unchanging feature of all societies where a group of people are themselves well-fed and simultaneously have the financial capacity to feed thousands who cannot come up with enough to eat by the end of the same day? Some of the wealthiest people in the world happen to be Muslims; the hungry Muslims rarely come into contact with these types except on the odd occasion where one of them is seen in a *masjid* having trouble making a *sajdah* because he is just physically unable to do so. If he cannot make a single *sajdah* without straining, would it be out of the realm of possibility to assume that such a person cannot complete a single fast in Ramaḍān? This *āyah* is saying that in Ramaḍān, and by extension all the other months of the year, *al-ladhīna āmanū*, who are entrusted with delivering equity, stability, and security to society, should come to the annual realization that no one should go hungry because not only is there abundant food in society, but there is also abundant wealth to ensure that everyone has access to that food. Millionaires and billionaires who cannot fast have the responsibility to feed the millions and billions of the poor who cannot eat.

Allah (ﷻ) is informing *al-ladhīna āmanū* of this enduring trademark of dysfunctional societies: a radical maldistribution of wealth is consistent with a radical maldistribution of food. And Ramaḍān is a time to take corrective measures before Allah's (ﷻ) corrective justice takes no prisoners. And so when *al-ladhīna āmanū* notice even a hint of this kind of polarization, they ought to know that during the year they should have taken appropriate action by putting in place institutional mechanisms to enable the transfer of wealth from those who have, and more so during Ramaḍān, to those who need, if only just to eat. But when there is no critical mass called *al-ladhīna āmanū* to maintain divine order in society, what can be expected of the filthy rich Muslims and their wealth? And what does the society of which they are a part look like? They

are stashing it in Western bank accounts, businesses, and financial institutions to bankroll those who have plenty of time to play and whose supermarkets are well-stocked. They are more worried about the value of their stock certificates dropping rather than about taking stock of the numbers of hungry in their own neighborhoods and precincts. They place more confidence in their investments with overindulgent capitalism and atheistic secularism than they do in their investment with Allah (ﷻ) by feeding His hungry and starving servants. And to boot, their homelands and native societies are amongst the worst off on earth when it comes to famine, disease, overwhelming anxiety, and insecurity.

Besides the health and character benefits of fasting in Ramaḍān is the knowledge that we are fasting in the month that was chosen for the revelation of the Qur'an, either in the sense that it was brought down from the heavenly domain into the realm of human perception, or in the sense that the Qur'an unfurls its meanings to the human mind during the observance of this month,

It was the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur'an was [first] bestowed from on high as a guidance to man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month shall fast throughout it; but he that is ill, or on a journey [shall fast instead of the same] number of other days... (2:185).

This is the *āyah* that annuls any license for an able-bodied Muslim to skip any day of fasting in Ramaḍān if he is not travelling or sick. The only exceptions are the elderly and the weak, **“Allah wills for you agility [easiness], and He does not wish for you affliction.”**

This statement is as true of Islam in general as it is of fasting in particular. All Islamic obligations may be demanding, but not to the extent of misery and pain. Behind all the Islamic obligations is the Will of Allah (ﷻ) that will not allow His adhering subjects to be tortured while they are performing their mandatory tasks for Him. Allah (ﷻ) is telling the Muslims that life was

not meant to be an unbearable task. His *dīn* is meant to be practiced within the tolerance level of human nature. Thus a Muslim gains the type of positive and optimistic attitude that accepts Allah's (ﷻ) instructions with a *can-do* attitude. Just as a tree is supposed to grow and water is supposed to flow, a Muslim is supposed to practice and improve. All the while he knows that Allah (ﷻ) is not whipping him with orders and lashing him with commands; Allah (ﷻ) wants man to be at ease within His commands and guidelines.

With this understanding *ṣawm* (fasting) is a privilege that deserves to be glorified and appreciated, **“...and that you extol Allah for His having guided you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him].”**

No one can appreciate the month of Ramaḍān unless he fasts and in the process — as the days of Ramaḍān go by — he begins to realize that “strength” is not a bulky body but rather a determined spirit. A determined spirit is free when it has no sins nailing it to the world. In Ramaḍān, a Muslim not only commits his stomach to a form of hunger, but also commits his soul and mind to a form of hunger: a hunger for Allah (ﷻ). During the days of fasting the stomach screams for the food of the earth but then falls silent; whereupon the soul begs for Allah (ﷻ) in eternity and cannot fall silent. Not only is the stomach tamed, but all other appetites are tamed. Indeed in Ramaḍān there is a realization of Allah's (ﷻ) guidance. Consequently all those who experience this yearly training exalt Allah (ﷻ) in a way that intensifies the *taqwá* within them. What is a physical deprivation at the beginning of Ramaḍān becomes a spiritual satisfaction at its end.

Those who are taking a close look at these *āyāt* should note that what starts out as an activity of the committed Muslims, **“O you who are secure [in your covenant with Allah]! Fasting is ordained for you...”** ends as guidance for all of mankind, **“It was the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur'an was [first] bestowed from on high as a guidance to [all] mankind and a self-evident proof of that guidance...”** The first generation of Muslims and the Prophet (ﷺ) fasted at most only 10 Ramaḍāns together. But what

kind of a change did the entire world see by force of just these 10 Ramaḍāns? The early Muslims gained *taqwá* during Ramaḍān, and for the rest of the year they ensured that those in the world around them gained freedom from the shackles of fealty to any earthly *tāghūti* authority. They fought their internal attachments to the world in Ramaḍān, and for the next 11 months, they fought those who would bind the mass of people to worldly policies of graft, corruption, greed, tyranny, and slavery. They got closer to Allah (ﷻ) in Ramaḍān, and then they made Allah's (ﷻ) mercy and salvation within reach of those who previously had no hope. They understood that a societal *taqwá* was the key to balance and order in their world, and as much as acquiring *taqwá* was a preparatory event in Ramaḍān, ridding the world of all its endemic evils was a responsibility in the other months.

Today, billions of Muslims are fasting for scores of years on end, and there is no change in the way the world runs. There must be a problem. This is a performance measure. If the Muslims are fasting and the world around them is as oppressive and unsettled as it was a few years before, or perhaps more so, then this means their fasting in Ramaḍān has not been effective. It means that the *taqwá-building* activity that should reach a fever pitch during Ramaḍān is not even a dim bulb. It means that if *taqwá* was becoming a part of their individual psychologies and their societal behaviors, then there would be no question about the earthly presence of a group called *al-ladhīna āmanū*. More and more Muslims are fasting every year, yet the number of the world's hungry, oppressed, displaced, and forgotten also continues to rise. The relationship between worldwide instability should be inversely related to the number of Muslims fasting in Ramaḍān.

That is because the aspect of *taqwá* is missing from Muslim observances of devotion to Allah (ﷻ); acts of devotion are redeemed when they are transfixed into a societal momentum to conform to Allah's (ﷻ) command and counsel and when they become part of the natural way Muslims address issues of social imbalance. Billions of Muslims doing their own thing and fasting while taking little notice of the real world they live in does not con-

stitute the critical mass known as *al-ladhīna āmanū*. There could be two billion Muslims but no consolidated fraternity amongst them that could gel into a concentrated force called *al-ladhīna āmanū*; however, at the same time, there could be only 400 or 500, as they were around the Prophet (ﷺ), who could fit that description. So it is not the number of Muslims who are fasting, it is the fasting numbers who can get together upon a singular directional course. And *taqwā* is not only supposed to make the Muslims think with one mind, but moreover it is supposed to put all humanity on a synergistic pursuit of social justice: one Lord, one common father, and one *dīn*.

As long as there are individual Muslims in the world doing their own thing, unrelated as those things are to the integrated imperatives of their Prophet (ﷺ), then they will continue to live in a world where all nations, countries, and peoples are doing their own thing, or where a small group of powerful nations are making the rest of the world's nations do the wrong things. And people going in all different directions lead to the kind of chaotic world we have inherited today. To the extent that the Muslims can use Ramaḍān to crystallize on a commitment to make the Prophet (ﷺ) their leader in all affairs, they can expect the rest of the world to fall in behind them on all the other things. As any Muslim views the nature of the modern world he lives in, he should recognize the Ramaḍān that does not translate into salient benefits and relief for the world's suffering poor is not a Ramaḍān at all.

Allah (ﷻ) Responds to a Fasting Person's Supplication

Before the *āyāt* go on to give details about fasting, such as what is permissible during Ramaḍān, there is an interesting detour about Ramaḍān. One *āyah*, in particular, draws our attention to the reality of Allah (ﷻ) and how we should respond to Him. We go from the bodily discomfort of abstaining from food and water to the self-satisfying comfort of obtaining His company and proximity,

And if My subjects ask you about Me, indeed, I am very close; I answer him who calls on Me whenever he evokes

Me. They should, then, respond to Me and commit themselves to Me so they may reach maturity (2:186).

The meanings of this *āyah* are emphasized by its placement in the context of Ramaḍān, which is reminiscent of the Prophet's (ﷺ) hadith about a Muslim's proximity to Allah (ﷻ) during the *sajdah*, "A subject is closest to his Sovereign when he is in prostration."¹⁴⁶ So a *sajdah* in Ramaḍān has an even greater value. Allah (ﷻ) is telling us to approach Him by *du'ā'*. On the authority of Salmān al-Fārsī, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said,

*Allah is ashamed of refusing the request of a person who extends his hands to Allah asking Him of what is good and virtuous.*¹⁴⁷

Other hadiths state,

*Any Muslim on the face of the earth who asks Allah will be granted his request or will have its equivalent in deterring evil as long as that Muslim does not ask for a misconduct or [family] estrangement.*¹⁴⁸

*Each will be answered if he is not covetous and craven, saying, "I have asked Allah but He has not responded to me."*¹⁴⁹

*[The Prophet (ﷺ) said], "A servant [of Allah] will continue to have his requests met [by Allah] as long as he does not ask for anything wayward or anything to harm family relations. And as long as he does not expect Allah to fit into his time schedule." The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked, "But what is his time schedule?" He said, "When a person says, 'I have asked and beseeched Allah but I see that He is not responding to me.' For which he becomes disenchanted and abandons *du'ā'*."¹⁵⁰*

When a Muslim is fasting he becomes the most eligible person for a response from Allah (ﷻ),

*A fasting person at the time he breaks his fast is due for a reply to his du‘ā’.*¹⁵¹

*At the time of breaking his fast a Muslim’s du‘ā’ cannot be refused.*¹⁵²

*There are three whose du‘ā’ cannot be declined: a just imam, a fasting person until he breaks his fast, and the appeal of a victim of injustice or oppression which will be raised to high heaven on the Day of Resurrection. For it [the du‘ā’] heaven will open its doors, and He [Allah] will say, “With My glory I will support you — even if it may take [some] time.”*¹⁵³

Rules About How to Observe the Fast

The next *āyah* details particular rules about fasting. It says that intimate contact between husband and wife during the nights of Ramaḍān (that is, between *maghrib* and *fajr*) is permissible, so is eating and drinking. The *āyah* also defines the time of day to fast: from the break of day to the onset of night. And finally, it proscribes sexual intercourse during the time of *i‘tikāf* (retiring into a *masjid* for *ṣalāh* and *dhikr*).

It is lawful for you to go to your wives during the night preceding the [day’s] fast; they are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them. Allah is aware that you would have deprived yourselves of this right, and so He has turned to you in His mercy and removed this hardship from you. Now, then, you may commence [sexual desire] with them, and avail yourselves of that which Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of night, and then resume fasting until nightfall; but do not have [sexual] intercourse when you are about to abide in meditation in *masjids*. These are the bounds set by Allah; do not,

then, offend against them, [for] it is thus that Allah makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might remain conscious [of Allah’s power and sovereignty] (2:187).

When the early Muslims first executed this obligation of fasting, they were allowed to satisfy their appetites only at the time of *iftār*. If a person was to wake up in the middle of the night or any time before dawn he would not be able to eat, drink, or indulge his desire. It happened on occasion that, for whatever reason, some Muslims were not able to take food at the time of *iftār*, perhaps because they were overcome with sleep, and so had to combine two days of fasting. The second day of fasting was then extremely strenuous. In other cases, a wife would go to sleep before the husband and the husband would be left to struggle with his internal urge. These types of complaints were brought to the attention of the Prophet (ﷺ) who referred them to the ease and facility of fasting which was more pronounced to them as they had to endure a regimental initiation that was not suitable to their state of nature. It was in response to these practical difficulties that this *āyah* was revealed.

“It is lawful for you during the nights [of Ramaḍān] to engage your women [in sex].” Allah’s (ﷻ) words do not leave this male-female relationship simply as a bestial feature of man. He refines it, saying, **“They [the females] are your dress, and you [the males] are their dress.”** A dress serves to conceal a person’s privacy and to insulate him from outside conditions. In other words this relationship between husband and wife is a social and a physical cover of protection. Such are the beautiful words of the Qur’an, which spare Muslims the derogatory attitude to sexuality that has historically been symptomatic of Europe, as well as the anarchic practice of sex that has become commonplace in the West and elsewhere. Allah (ﷻ) lets us know that He is aware of our innermost thoughts. He also lets us know that He is responding with care and love to the composition of our human nature, which He created and knows very well, **“Allah knew that you would have deprived yourselves of this right [to have intercourse].”**

However, this extent of deprivation, even for that first generation of stellar Muslims around the Prophet (ﷺ), may have been unbearable. This is due to the fact that during the night there are flesh desires, lurking lust, and uncontrollable drives. The impulse and want for sex is so deep and so coercive that it is irresistible. And some may even have had sex when it was prohibited to have it outside the short time between *iftār* and the onset of night. Whatever may have been the case Allah (ﷻ) has forgiven them. Once they experienced for themselves how socially dysfunctional and psychologically irritating such a fast would be Allah (ﷻ) intervened and eliminated self-betrayal and spousal-betrayal so that human nature would not be hypocritical with itself, **“So now you may engage them [the wives] in intercourse.”**

But this is not to be done by parting company with Allah (ﷻ). This very act of intercourse has to be done with Allah as guide, **“...and avail yourselves of what Allah has ordained for you.”** Avail yourselves of what Allah (ﷻ) has made pleasurable and enjoyable; avail yourselves of the joy and delight of having your extended offspring, the result of such moments of ecstasy. In the larger scheme of things and in the passage of years, these moments of cohabitation are not just a selfish response to an urge; beyond that they are a fulfillment of Allah’s (ﷻ) Will to gratify the “other” of “the complementary pair,” and from that to have descendants and children who will carry the Will of Allah (ﷻ) into the future.

As merry and rhapsodic as those moments of togetherness are between husband and wife, there is a strategy extending beyond that, there is a horizon awaiting the generations that have been “reproduced” by that intimacy. In such a manner sex is elevated beyond the animal instinct. Sex in this scope is clean and rich. With this *āyah* and other *āyāt* in the Qur’an that present the issue of sex in a rational and positive mood, Muslims can appreciate how Allah (ﷻ) has educated this Ummah, raised its standards and expanded its horizons. Only the Qur’anic Muslims are able to lead humanity out of erroneous concepts and misleading ideas about the relationship between husband and wife, male and female, sexual urge and sexual response, without clashing with human nature,

without compromising human nature, and without perverting human nature.

Not only is sex permissible during the night but so is drinking and eating, “**And eat and drink until you are able to discern the white thread [of day] from the black thread [of night] from fajr.**” This means that would-be fasters are permitted to eat and drink until light is obvious. And this does not refer to “false impressions” of light, which in Islamic terminology is referred to as *al-fajr al-kādhīb* (the false dawn). From this *āyah* and the hadiths on the subject, it appears that Muslims are permitted to eat and drink until a time roughly midway between the beginning of dawn and sunrise, and probably nearer to the sunrise than the beginning of dawn. Most Muslims begin their *imsāk* (abstention) a little before *fajr* (dawn) lest they inadvertently eat or drink when they are not allowed to. But if this *āyah* was more carefully considered, it would become evident the most Muslims who fast are not availing themselves of the ease that Allah (ﷻ) made lawful for them.

This raises an issue that needs to be considered in the light of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). Centuries-old customs and inaccurate traditions have no relevance here. This issue is: what is the actual time of day at which Muslims should stop eating and drinking to start their fast? Similarly, at what time after dusk should they satisfy the cravings of the appetite? The answer to such questions must come from the Qur’an and Sunnah, and not from inherited social habits or the blind acceptance of earlier religious opinions.

In the *āyāt* above, 2:183–188, Allah (ﷻ) gives instructions on how we should fast, and then paints a larger picture within which fasting plays a pivotal role in our lives. Let us concentrate, then, on the *āyāt* that pinpoint the time at which we should begin our daily fast as well as the time we should end it. In *āyah* 2:187, He says,

And eat and drink until you can clearly distinguish the white thread [of day] from the black thread [of night]; then complete your fast until night (2:187).

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ
الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتُمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ

This *āyah* states that a Muslim is permitted to eat and drink throughout the night until it is obvious for him to distinguish the rays of light from the darkness of night. The word *yatabayyana* is also used in other *āyāt* of the Qur'an. In *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, Allah (ﷻ) says,

May Allah pardon you [O Prophet]! Why did you grant them permission [to stay at home] before it had become obvious (*yatabayyana*) to you who was truthful, and [before] you came to know [who were] the liars? (9:43).

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
وَتَعْلَمَ الْكٰذِبِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Similarly, in *Sūrah Fuṣṣilat*, Allah (ﷻ) states,

In time, We shall show them Our evidential presence [through what they perceive] in the skyline horizons [of the universe] and within themselves, so that the truth will become obvious (*yatabayyana*) (41:53).

سَأُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ
الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

Anyone who seeks out the word *yatabayyana* and its derivatives in the Qur'an will understand immediately that it means a clear and positive indication. So when this same word is used by Allah (ﷻ) to define the distinction between night and day, He means that we should eat and drink until the end of night and the start of day are recognizable and pronounced, until we are able to see light on the horizon and in the air. And this does not refer to those imaginary beams that precede the onset of *fajr*, *al-fajr al-kādhib*. Allah's (ﷻ) words are speaking of the crystal clear observation of evident and unmistakable light that ends the night. This can only be observed after the onset of *fajr*, and not before *fajr* as is the habitual practice.

Ibn Jarīr in his narration on the authority of Samuraḥ ibn Jandab said, "The Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'Do not be lured by Bilāl's call and this [apparent] glimmer; wait until *fajr* bursts out or until it is high *fajr*.'"¹⁵⁴ A slightly different narration of this same hadith comes from Shu'bah and others by way of Sawād ibn Hanẓalah from Samuraḥ who said,

*The Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Bilāl's call to ṣalāh [adhān] and the beginning of fajr should not bar you from your saḥar meal. The time for abstaining from the meal is a fajr well into its horizontal dispersion."*¹⁵⁵

This horizontal sparkle and glare of *fajr* actually precedes sunrise by a short time. It is reported in some places that Bilāl would give the *adhān* early to wake people up. In other words, the *adhān* was a wake-up call for Muslims to get up and eat before it was too late. Later Ibn Umm Maktūm would say the *adhān* of *imsāk*.

Likewise, the same *āyah* says that we Muslims should continue our fast until nightfall, "***thumma atimmū al-ṣiyāma ilá al-layl: then finalize your fast until nightfall.***" The word *nightfall* (*layl*) should be viewed as distinct from sunset or sundown; otherwise the Qur'anic *āyah* could have used the words *maghrib* or *ghurūb* in place of *layl*.

If we compare these instructions with the way Muslims observe their fast nowadays, we find that there is an obvious error

in the times that we begin and end our daily fast. Most Muslims stop eating and drinking between 10 and 25 minutes *before* the time for *Fajr ṣalāḥ*, when it is still obviously pitch dark (night) and there are no traces of day. Allah (ﷻ) has given us the permission, if not the order, to eat and drink until the fabric of day is distinguishable from the fabric of night. We would be better off complying.

The previous discussion highlights some misunderstandings Muslims have amongst themselves. In the wider human culture, historically as well as currently, fasting is not unknown, and there are varying interpretations of its meaning. Some claim that depriving the self from food, drink, and sexual relations for an extended period of time puts an extraordinarily heavy strain on the body. Is this, in fact, the case? And is this obligation of fasting in Ramaḍān akin to the Christian belief of purifying the soul by punishing the body? In this context, before moving on to the other important aspects of Ramaḍān, it would be instructive to examine the impact of *ṣawm* on the human body.

In the first instance, across the faith and secular science spectrum, there is much give-and-take about what it means to fast. Does it mean that an individual only stops eating, but is permitted to drink water or other fluids? Or does it mean that an individual can eat and drink, but avoid all types of meat? And then for how long? Is this to continue for hours? Days? Weeks? Or months? Depending on who you speak to, there are numerous types of fasts. Therefore, let us consider two examples of fasts in different religious and secular traditions, so that we can appreciate and prize the way Allah (ﷻ) has defined *ṣawm*, which has no ambiguity or flaws in it.

The first definition of fasting is taken from the Catholic faith. In Catholicism, the main period of fasting is the 40 days of Lent, the period immediately preceding Easter, which commemorates the fast of Christ in the desert. Lent has been a period of fasting almost since the time of the Apostles (ﷺ) themselves, although the number of days has been increased from 36 to 40 and there have also been other changes since. Other fasts are those of the Fridays of Advent (a period of penitence before Christmas),

the Ember Days, the vigils of Christmas, the Pentecost, the Assumption, and of All Saints.¹⁵⁶

The fast is to be observed by the eating of one full meal a day, which may be taken either in the middle of the day or in the evening. Besides this, the Church allows a *collation* (a light meal allowed during a fast, now considered to be about eight ounces of food), which is generally taken in the evening, though it may be taken at noon. Now also permitted in the morning is a beverage, like coffee or tea or juice, along with a small morsel of bread or biscuit. The fasting regulations are generally summed up in the *Regulations of Lent*, issued every year by each diocese. The following is an example from the Archdiocese of the City of Baltimore, Maryland in the United States:¹⁵⁷

Part I

1. All the faithful who have completed their 21st year, unless exempt by dispensation or some other legitimate cause, are bound to observe the fast of Lent.
2. They are to make one meal only a day, except on Sundays.
3. A small refreshment, commonly called a collation, is permitted in the evening.
4. The following persons are exempt from the obligations of fasting: persons under 21 years of age, the sick, nursing women, those who are obliged to do hard labor, and those who, through weakness, cannot fast without great prejudice to their health.
5. The faithful are reminded that, besides the obligations of fasting imposed by the Church, this holy season of Lent should be, in an especial manner, a time of earnest prayer, of sorrow for sins, of seclusion from the world and its amusements, and of generous alms-giving.

Part II

By virtue of an *Indult* (a permission granted by the Pope to do something not sanctioned by the common disciplinary law of the Church) *to the United States the following special dispensations are granted:*

1. The use of flesh-meat is permitted at all meals on Sundays and one a day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, with the exception of the second and last Saturdays of Lent. But flesh-meat and fish are not to be used at the same meal during Lent, even on Sundays.
2. The use of butter, cheese, milk, and eggs is also permitted every day of Lent.
3. It is allowed in the morning to take some warm liquid, as teas, coffee, or thin chocolate, made with water, and with this liquid a mouthful of bread.
4. Those for whom the hour of noon may be an inconvenient time for dinner may invert the order and take the collation in the morning and their dinner in the evening.
5. The use of hog's lard or drippings, instead of butter, is authorized in preparing permitted food.
6. Persons exempt from the obligation of fasting are free to take meat more than once on those days when its use is granted by dispensation.

Part III

By virtue of an *Indult* granted to us by the Holy See, March 15, 1895, we permit to all working men and their families the use of flesh-meat once a day on all fast days and abstinence days throughout the year, with the exception of Fridays, Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday and Saturday of Holy Week, and the Eve of Christmas. Those who are exempt from the obligation of fasting are free to take meat more than once on the days mentioned. Those who avail themselves of this *Indult* are not allowed to use flesh-meat and fish at the same meals, and they are earnestly exhorted to perform some other act of mortification, such as abstinence from intoxicating liquors.

The above gives a sense of what it means to fast in the Catholic tradition: what one can eat or cannot eat, the length of such a fast, who makes decisions that define the fast, exceptions and exemptions coming from the Church, etc.

Let us now look at the secular and scientific meaning of fasting in one of its versions. Fasting is defined as choosing not to eat. Fasting for a day with adequate water is generally safe for healthy adults. Children are more susceptible to problems associated with fasting because their reserves of glycogen and fat are smaller; prolonged fasting causes major metabolic changes that can eventually be harmful. As for those who fast for longer periods, on the first day of fasting, carbohydrates stored in the liver as glycogen are broken down to supply blood glucose. During the first week, body fat begins to be broken down to meet the energy requirements of the body. Muscle protein breakdown yields amino acids, which the liver converts to blood sugar (gluconeogenesis) to fuel the brain. With prolonged fasting, the body's metabolic rate slows in order to conserve energy, so that internal fuels are used more efficiently. With excessive fat breakdown, ketone bodies (water-soluble acids derived from fatty acids) can accumulate in the blood. They acidify the blood, causing excessive urination, which in turn causes dehydration and loss of electrolytes. Severe imbalance of ions in the blood can lead to heart failure.¹⁵⁸

Three commonly stated reasons for fasting include weight loss, detoxification, and altered states of consciousness,

1. *Weight loss* – Fasting is not a recommended weight loss strategy. Fasting causes considerable weight loss initially (up to 5 pounds per week), but this represents extensive water loss, not fat loss. Such lost weight will be regained rapidly upon return to the normal diet. Studies show that during fasts, muscle is lost, as well as fat, and lost muscle may be rapidly replaced by fat at the end of the fast.
2. *Detoxification* (a procedure for the removal of toxins) – As body fat is consumed, materials trapped or stored in fatty tissue may be released. Weakened cells in tissues are selectively destroyed by the immune system. The buildup of toxic materials released into the bloodstream can create an additional metabolic burden and oxidative stress for the liver, which is responsible for disposing of toxic materials.

3. *Altered states of consciousness* – During fasting, individuals sometimes experience a greater clarity of mind, and fasting has traditionally accompanied forms of meditation.

Medical precautions suggested by secular advocates of fasting state that no one should fast more than a day or so without medical supervision; pregnant or lactating women, children, adolescents whose bodies are growing, and diabetics should not fast; plenty of fluids should be consumed; and the fast should be ended by several small meals rather than with one large one. The emphasis is clearly on physical benefits rather than spiritual or even psychological ones.

Obviously the erratic approach to fasting as practiced by some other religions and fasting as described by some medics still do not serve the full purpose of fasting from an Islamic perspective, which is to build *taqwá*. *Ṣawm* is meant to stiffen the Muslim's determination and to build his willpower. A Muslim voluntarily and consciously resists his desires for food and physical intimacy during daylight hours for the month of Ramaḍān. Deliberately avoiding such things, which are otherwise permitted, for one month makes it easier for him to avoid those things that are not permissible at other times. It takes patience and willpower to restrain oneself from the urges of appetites, and the *ṣawm* instills this discipline into each practicing Muslim. The Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, "*Fasting is half of patience.*"¹⁵⁹ The Islamic concept of fasting is not meant to torture the soul but rather to culture and cultivate it.

Each day in which a Muslim observes his fast he is conscious of Allah (ﷻ) observing him. The consciousness develops and is entrenched so that it becomes difficult if not impossible for a Muslim to try and "get away" with doing things he should not do. And even when a Muslim slips into wrongdoing, his conscience will restrain him provided he has the *taqwá* that is cultivated in Ramaḍān. Thereby he will be able to better understand Allah (ﷻ) when He says,

Verily, they who are conscious of Allah bethink themselves [of Him] whenever any dark suggestion from

Satan touches them, whereupon, lo! they begin to see [things] clearly (7:201).

The higher purpose of *ṣawm* is expressed in some of the following hadith,

*Whoever fasts Ramaḍān as an act of faith, commitment and altruism will have his previous sins forgiven.*¹⁶⁰

*He [the fasting person] parts with his food, water, and lustfulness for My sake.*¹⁶¹

and in a *ḥadīth qudsī*,

*All works of Adam's descendant are his except fasting; it is Mine and I shall reward [him] for it.*¹⁶²

The Muslim who practices this yearly exercise begins to know what it is like to be deprived of food, water, and nutrients. This generates in the heart of the practicing Muslim feelings of compassion and care for those who do not have food or cannot afford to feed their families. This builds a two-way bridge of sensitivity by which a committed Muslim becomes authentically concerned with those in need. So when a Muslim expresses concern for the poor and needy he does so from experience. Ramaḍān and fasting also confer an air of equality on everyone, rich and poor, the haves and the have-nots, because everyone is expected to fast.

Nor is the Islamic fast only a physical abstention from food and water; it is also a deliberate abstention from doing harm or causing harm. The tongue is not allowed to speak evil, the eye is not allowed to watch evil, and so on. The physical fast is meaningless without this abstention. The Prophet (ﷺ) says, “Whoever does not cease speaking or acting falsely, then Allah does not have a need for him to cease eating and drinking.”¹⁶³ These words of the Prophet (ﷺ) seem to confirm the linguistic meaning of the word *ṣawm*: abstention or self-denial, in particular, from dissembling speech. Of

course, with the advent of Muhammadi Islam, the word *ṣawm* acquired a *shar'ī* character and meaning, but in times past, the word referred to abstaining from excessive speech. The Qur'an also sustains this understanding, when it uses the word *ṣawm* to describe a "fast" that Maryam, the mother of Jesus (ﷺ), kept from speaking,

**Eat, then, and drink, and let your eye be gladdened!
And if you should see any human being, convey this to
him [by gestures], "Behold, abstinence from speech
have I vowed unto the Most Gracious; hence, I may
not speak today to any mortal" (19:26).**

To discipline the tongue is not an easy task, or to restrain the tongue by a disciplined mind takes patience, practice, and a heavy dose of humility. Said another way, those who have a hard time controlling how much they put in their stomachs also have a hard time regulating the number and nature of words that come out of their mouths.

The days of Ramaḍān pass very quickly. It is almost universal for fasting Muslims to realize that Ramaḍān is a short month. Its days for those who are truly observing the fast are filled with grace, good deeds, and an air of transcendence. On the authority of Salmān, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, "[Ramaḍān's] beginning is mercy; its midway is forgiveness; and its end is freedom from the fire."¹⁶⁴ Another hadith states that, "How many persons fast but the only thing they have of their fasting is hunger and thirst."¹⁶⁵

There are of course some variations on the rules governing *ṣawm* between the different Islamic schools of thought. All Muslims agree that intentional eating, drinking, or sexual activity during the daylight hours invalidate the fast, without any exemption. However, there are areas in which there are varied *fiqhī* positions, all based on equally-valid judicial opinions. For example, one school of thought rules that the swallowing of phlegm or sputum invalidates the fast; absentminded eating is also considered to break the fast by one school of thought, as is total immersion of the body in water (for example in swimming). According to at least two schools of

thought, *kuhl* (eyeliner), if it seeps into the mouth, invalidates the fast; and in another school of thought, gargling, tooth-brushing, and inhaling water through the nose invalidates the fast if some water drips into the stomach whether that is unintentional or accidental. Such variations of judicial understanding are marginal, however, and do not affect the essential nature or object of the *ṣawm*.

During the last ten days of Ramaḍān, some Muslims decide to perform what is called *i'tikāf*, which consists of retiring to a *masjid* for prayer and contemplation in seclusion. If a Muslim resolves to spend the final days of Ramaḍān in the state of *i'tikāf*, he should not go home unless it is necessary to do so to break fast or take care of some urgent issue. It is also a period of total celibacy, day and night. The object of *i'tikāf* is for the *mu'takif* (one who enters into the state of *i'tikāf*) to achieve an intense communion with Allah (ﷻ). And as this is the case, any sexual activity would only dilute or rupture this intense attachment to Allah (ﷻ). *I'tikāf* is a type of trance that balances a persons attachment to Allah (ﷻ) with his detachment from everything else, including spouse. The heart is enchanted and captivated by Allah (ﷻ). So He says, **“And do not be aroused by their sexual intimacy while you are in the *masjids* in seclusion [with Me].”** It is based on the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), but is understood not to be a mandatory obligation (*fard*); it may be regarded as a voluntary, optional, or additional benefit of Ramaḍān.

With all these guidelines, which simultaneously provide a structure for executing the fast and building *taqwá* through the fast, there is no room for a “church” to redefine, issue annulments, or even change from one generation to another the meaning of fasting or the timing of fasting. And there is no time to wait on “slow-poke” science to catch up with Allah’s (ﷻ) wisdom so that it can explain when and how to fast. It is all done clearly and authoritatively, **“...these are the thresholds set by Allah: do not, then, offend against them.”**

Many Muslims seem tempted to talk up the difficulty of the fast, or exaggerate the times of day, the amount to eat, or the abstinence from sexual relations, or the importance of seclusion during the last ten days, and so on. But Allah (ﷻ) is clear in explaining

that everything one has to know about fasting has been explained and that he should not go beyond these bounds. Therefore, **“Allah makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might remain on guard and vigilant [of His power].”** *Taqwá* is a committed Muslim’s guard and alertness of Allah (ﷻ).

Ramaḍān is Supposed to Mitigate Class Polarization

Of course there are bigger issues at stake. Developing, in Ramaḍān, a personally closer attachment to Allah (ﷻ) and “feeling” what the less fortunate have to go through all year round should lead to transformative changes in the societies of fasting Muslims. Having said that, the current status of Muslims with respect to Ramaḍān and fasting deserves some comment. Governments and administrations in Muslim lands have made it impossible for any enlightened probe into the social, medical, psychological, military and economic benefits of Ramaḍān. There are no budgets in the Muslim world for researching the effects of Ramaḍān on the physiology and psychology of Muslims. There are no studies that highlight the place of Ramaḍān within the larger dietary standards and requirements of an Islamic society.

Also at fault are many Muslim physicians and medics. They have not pooled together their knowledge and experience to shed much needed light on the effects of the Muslim fast. There are uninvestigated areas of fasting the Islamic way that await the research of experienced, enlightened, and professional Muslim doctors.

And lastly, many “ordinary” Muslims and their habits during the fasting of Ramaḍān cannot be excluded from criticism. Multitudes do not have enough to eat when they break their fast, deliberately eating only a third of a meal. At the same time, there are enough Muslims who have too much to eat; in fact, they may be eating three meals at one time when they break their fast. Fasting and Ramaḍān were not meant for some Muslims to starve while others routinely indulge.

There are also Muslims who are unable to marry because they cannot support a family. They cannot find food or shelter for them-

selves, much less think about supporting a wife and caring for children. When they read in the Qur'an about husband-and-wife relations in Ramaḍān, they realize its irrelevance to them. On the other hand are those who have two, three, or even four wives, and whose habits in Ramaḍān are very much unrelated to curbing the very appetites that fasting is supposed to instill. The nutritional and marital polarization in the community seems to become more acute every Ramaḍān. When Ramaḍān fails to bridge the hearts of poor Muslims with the hearts of those who are well-off, it means the appetites that should have been conquered in this holy month were not, and the chasm between the two continues to grow because of the psychological failure that fuels the social divide.

This is perhaps why the following *āyah* is appended to the *āyāt* of *ṣawm*,

And devour not one another's possessions wrongfully while taking it all the way to the decision makers to [at the end] devour a proportion of people's possessions sinfully all the while you are aware of this [unbecoming act] (2:188).

There is more than a subtle link here between the appetite for food and the appetite for material wealth. The location of this *āyah* at the end of the *āyāt* of fasting indicates that one type of greed begets other types. A stomach that wants to be filled with food is paralleled by a bank account that demands to be filled with money. The human psyche tends to be preoccupied with food, sex, and money. Fasting is meant to break the grip of these preoccupations on our minds. It is also meant to break or weaken the relationship between wealth and power.

This *āyah* should force us to consider those Muslims who have wealth and power. How many preachers and “imams” will have the impropriety and sense of contemporary awareness to concentrate the Muslim mind during the month of Ramaḍān on the Muslim elites who are powerful and who are wealthy, asking whether they fasted the month of Ramaḍān according to these *āyāt*? And who are

the knowledgeable Muslim scholars that would alert the Muslim masses to the relationship of the ruling classes with the money lobby, the most potent lobby on earth? Because the Muslims have been rendered impotent by their (lack of) leaders, who constantly direct them away from Allah's (ﷻ) liberating words, the Ummah is deaf, dumb, and blind when it comes to realizing how money buys politicians and how politicians serve the super-rich.

When reading this *āyah*, one profession that should come to mind is *lobbying*, the practice of influencing government decisions (legislation, awarding of contracts, etc.) on behalf of a special interest. In Washington, there are over 35,000 lobbyists that watch every move of the legislators in congress and the executive branch. They represent all kinds of groups and associations ranging from nurses and teachers, to senior citizens and the handicapped, to environmentalists and endangered species, to defense contractors and foreign governments. Defenders of the practice suggest that it is a right protected by the free-speech aspect of the first amendment to the US Constitution, under the clause, "...to petition the government for a redress of grievances." They also say that the democratic system of governance and lobbying activities go hand in hand; that competitive advocacy positions lead to a much more vigorous debate in congress and thus much important legislation to the general benefit of all the citizens ends up passing.

Despite all the impassioned defenses of the practice and attempts to "draw a fine line" between lobbying and bribery, the public generally views lobbyists to be in the same category as politicians and automobile salesmen. And this is because they recognize that the real issue here is how the influence of money shapes government decisions in a way that concentrates more and more power in the hands of the wealthy. Not enough Americans understand that both political parties in the US, the democrats and republicans, are owned completely by corporate interests, and that elected officials and special interest activists partner to shuttle profits to US multinational corporations at the expense of the average worker. According to Political MoneyLine, a nonpartisan research service that tracks campaign contributions, and the Center for Public Integrity,

Corporations, entire industries and other special interest groups spent a record \$2.14 billion on lobbying members of Congress and 220 other federal agencies last year [2004]. That figure represents a 7 percent increase over 2003 and an astonishing 34 percent jump from the amount of money spent on lobbying in 2001... All told, corporations and special interests have spent more than \$12 billion on lobbying efforts over that time [since 1998].

The corporate lobby has become more effective recently because it's hiring more experienced players, in effect creating a "revolving door" between Capitol Hill [the Senate and the House of Representatives] and K Street [the street in Washington where many lobbying organizations maintain their offices]. In fact, 43 percent of the eligible congressional members who departed government during that time have become lobbyists, while half of all eligible departing senators have become lobbyists. Nearly 250 former members of Congress and federal agency chiefs have become lobbyists since 1998, while more than 2,200 former federal employees have registered as federal lobbyists.

The striking rise in money spent on lobbying also increases the chances for abuse... The biggest abuses, however, stem from lobbyists' paying for politicians' dinners, trips, golf outings and more. Members of Congress over the past five years have received more than \$18 million to travel the world at the expense of private organizations. Those expenses include 6,242 trips for 628 lawmakers from both political parties.¹⁶⁶

The official US budget for fiscal year 2008 was \$2.9 trillion of which \$261 billion was directed at paying interest on the national debt, and \$696 billion was directed at the Department of Defense (\$481.4 billion), the Department of Homeland Security (\$34.3 billion), the Department of State (\$35 billion), and the Global War on Terror (\$145.2 billion).¹⁶⁷ This does not include spending for the

war in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are funded through special appropriations. By contrast, the same budget only allocates \$20.2 billion dollars to the Department of Justice. Even though all lobbying activities are geared toward securing a piece of this pie for their constituents, members, and employers, one can see why the most hi-powered lobbyists, who work for defense contractors and the financial sector, petition those departments that receive the highest amount of funding. In looking at the interest paid on the national debt, one cannot help but to reach a conclusion that the worldwide banking sector, which buys US debt in the form of treasury notes and bonds, represents a special interest that does not want to see a continuously rising national debt go away. In a capitalist society, “petitioning the government to redress grievances” takes the form of powerful and influential lobbies that oil the legislative machinery with massive amounts of money, much of it made illegally to begin with.

In Allah’s (ﷻ) words, the term *amwāl al-nās* refers to public monies that finance the activities associated with the state budget, in the case of the US, for instance, \$2.9 trillion. Allah (ﷻ) makes it clear that powerful special interests awash with cash are to be divested from state decision-making institutions altogether in order to prevent concentrated power, made up of bribery-prone government officials and a super-rich capital class, from illegitimately redirecting public monies away from the public interest and into their own coffers. But this is exactly what happens in 21st-century democracies around the world; state assembly houses have literally become a watering hole for all manner of special interests that seek to channel public monies into the hands of the wealthy. Of course, with the help of public relations firms, a euphemism sometimes used for lobbies, the special interests make it look like the public is benefitting. In point of fact, however, democratic governments have become a super-highway for wealth transfer from the working class to the rich, and their militaries function to ensure this flow remains uninterrupted.

One of the most notoriously powerful lobbies in the US is AIPAC, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee. From

1978–2008, AIPAC has contributed nearly \$47 million to the campaigns of 2,097 elected representatives, with the result that nearly every public official, democratic or republican, at the federal, state, local, and regional levels fears saying or doing anything that remotely looks like it is critical of Israeli policies and actions.¹⁶⁸ Insofar as US policy toward the Muslim world and Israel is concerned, it is completely shaped, formulated, and dictated by the Israelis. AIPAC needs no provocation to label someone an anti-Semite, and routinely mounts campaigns to exclude those who denounce Israeli aggressions from public discourse. It has the power to prevent public officials from either being elected or reelected; Senator Paul Findley and Representative Cynthia McKinney are recent examples.¹⁶⁹ In the middle of the 2008 invasion of Ghazzah (Gaza) by Israel, AIPAC arm-twisting forced the US Congress to pass a resolution reaffirming unmitigated support for Israel and to blame Hamas for the invasion; only two out of the 535 elected US officials voted against the resolution.¹⁷⁰ It is the only Washington organization overtly working for the interests of a foreign government that is not required to register as an agent of a foreign government under FISA (the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act). In terms of the dollar's value in 2004, because of the influence of AIPAC, the Jewish State has cost the US taxpayer nearly \$1.6 trillion.¹⁷¹ And what has the American taxpayer gotten in return? Blowback from a completely unsettled and unstable Middle East, hatred from the majority of the Muslim world because of the unceasing confiscation of more and more of the Holy Land, the destruction of the USS Liberty, spying and espionage activity by Mossad against the United States, and 9/11, which mounting evidence indicates was an inside job managed by Israeli and American intelligence.

And in the face of the most brazen corruption of the political and legislative process, and evidence in the Qur'an prohibiting the institutionalization of special interests in governing circles, why are Muslim political action groups, who are beginning to show a political pulse in the US, modeling themselves after AIPAC? Why are they petitioning the US federal government to redress grievances in the same way that other lobbies do, by presenting a bas-

ketful of cash, generally collected from Muslim business interests who have their own ulterior motives, to public representatives with the expectation that legislation would be written in their favor? Do they not read Allah's (ﷻ) *āyāt*? Do they not see that public funds are not to be directed at special interests, even if the demand is to equally distribute funds among all special interests? Do they not see that Allah (ﷻ) has prohibited private monies from being directed at public decision-makers and legislators? Do they not realize Allah (ﷻ) is warning them that such a process will inevitably lead to a transfer of Muslim community wealth out of the community altogether? In other words, do they not fast?

Muslim advocates of this position would argue that they are not a special interest. In order to defend their position, they say that fair treatment of the Muslims, with regard to the allocation of public monies for Muslim causes and the reordering of negative public sentiment against Muslims, is a *public* benefit. In which case, this group has to be asked: have you found a better means to achieve the application of Islamic principles than the Prophet (ﷺ)? By employing the means of lobbies and political action committees to petition the US federal government, have you found a methodology that is going to do a better job than the one used by the Prophet (ﷺ)? In order to form a partnership with the US federal government for the purpose of achieving a recognition of Islamic norms of social justice, the partners have to share a common set of values. These *āyāt* automatically preclude any such association. Perhaps, these types of nominal confidence-lacking Muslims, who look to organizations such as AIPAC as pacesetters and who similarly want to acquire power by any means possible, do share the same utilitarian values.

Ramaḍān and fasting would indeed be selfish if they were meant only to trim a few pounds of fat off individuals here and there, or to serve as a rubber-stamp on a status quo in which there are extremes of poverty and ostentation in the Ummah. The polarization between rich and poor, and between the powerful and the powerless, has never been so stark. Yet why have we reached an age when no one is willing to say, for instance, that the Saudi Arabian

government, and the family that owns it, has amassed wealth and power that Ramaḍān has failed to disconnect. *Zakāh* has not dented the Qārūnī ruling class of Arabia, nor have these *āyāt* caused Muslims to think. It is unconscionable for pulpit preachers to proclaim Ramaḍān as the month of equality and humility when this is so far from the truth. The inequalities are most blatant during the month of Ramaḍān, a time which should strengthen our determination to rid ourselves not only of the toxins that circulate in our bodies and the temptations that prey on our spirits, but also of those toxins that circulate in our societies, our body politics, and our Ummah. Our hope though is that a new page is being turned and that future Muslims will see the meanings of these *āyāt* not only on paper but also in the con artists and charlatans who have entrenched market forces in religion and who have sold out the scholars of Islam to the interests of the market.

Maintaining Security and Hajj are Tightly Connected

- (2:189) They will ask you about the new moons. Say, “They indicate the periods for [various doings of mankind], including the pilgrimage.” However, virtue does not consist in your entering houses from the rear, [as it were], but truly virtuous is he who is conscious of Allah. Hence enter houses through their doors, and remain conscious of Allah, so that you might attain to a happy state.
- (2:190) And fight in Allah’s cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression, for verily Allah does not love aggressors.
- (2:191) And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away — for oppression is even worse than killing. And fight not against them near the Inviolable House [of *‘ibādah*] unless they fight against you there first, but if they fight against you, slay them; such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth [of Allah’s power].

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ
بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى وَأَتُوا
الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ
﴿١٨٩﴾ وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ
اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَفَفْتُمُوهُمْ وَآخِرُجُوهُمْ
مِنْ حَيْثُ آخَرَجُوكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقْتَلُوا فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَتَلْتُمْ فَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكٰفِرِينَ
﴿١٩١﴾ فَإِنْ أَنْهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٢﴾ وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ
فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أَنْهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩٣﴾
الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ
فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ
الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٩٥﴾ وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا
أَسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ
مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذَى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ

فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ مِّنَ تَمَعِّعِ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ
فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۗ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ۗ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ
لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلَهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۗ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَةٌ ۗ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ
فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ۗ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ
خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمَهُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُونِ
يَأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٧﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا
فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۗ فَإِذَا أَفْضَيْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ
فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا
هَدَيْتُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾ ثُمَّ
أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ ۗ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ ۗ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٩﴾ فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا
اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ ءَابَاءَكُمْ ۗ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ۗ فَمِنَ النَّاسِ
مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا ءَاتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ
خَلْقٍ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا ءَاتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً

وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٌ وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ
 نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠٢﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي
 أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ
 تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ
 إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾

- (2:192) But if they desist — behold, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.
- (2:193) So fight against them until there is no more oppression and all the *dīn* is devoted to Allah alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who [wilfully] do wrong.
- (2:194) Fight during the sacred months if you are attacked, for a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] just retribution. Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you, but remain conscious of Allah, and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him.
- (2:195) And spend [freely] in Allah's cause, and let not your own hands throw you into destruction; and persevere in doing good — behold, Allah loves the doers of good;
- (2:196) And perform the pilgrimage and the pious visit [to Makkah] in honor of Allah; and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford. And do not shave your heads until the offering has been sacrificed, but he from among you who is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head shall redeem himself by fasting, or alms, or [any other] act of conformity [to Allah]. And if

you are hale and secure, then he who takes advantage of a pious visit before the [time of] pilgrimage shall give whatever offering he can easily afford; whereas he who cannot afford it shall fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days after his return, that is, ten full [days]. All this relates to him who does not live near the Inviolable House. And remain conscious of Allah, and know that Allah is severe in retribution.

- (2:197) The pilgrimage shall take place in the months appointed for it. And whoever undertakes the pilgrimage in those [months] shall, while on pilgrimage, abstain from lewd speech, from all wicked conduct, and from quarreling; and whatever good you may do, Allah is aware of it. And make provisions for yourselves — but, verily, the best of all provisions is *taqwá*. Remain, then conscious of Me, O you who are endowed with insight!
- (2:198) [However], you will be committing no sin if [during the pilgrimage] you seek to obtain any bounty from your Sustainer. And when you surge downward in multitudes from ‘Arafát, remember Allah at the holy place, remember Him as the one who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way.
- (2:199) And surge onward together with the multitude of all the other people who surge onward, and ask Allah to forgive you your sins, for, verily, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.
- (2:200) And when you have performed your acts of worship, [continue to] bear Allah in mind as you would bear your own fathers in mind — nay, with a yet keener remembrance! For there are people who [merely] pray, “O our Sustainer! Give us in this world;” and such shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come.
- (2:201) But there are among them such as pray, “O our Sustainer! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire;”
- (2:202) It is these that shall have their portion [of happi-

ness] in return for what they have earned. And Allah is swift in reckoning.

- (2:203) And bear Allah in mind during the appointed days; but he who hurries away within two days shall incur no sin, and he who tarries longer shall incur no sin, provided that he is conscious of Allah. Hence remain conscious of Allah, and know that unto Him you shall be gathered (al-Baqarah:189–203).

These *āyāt* are another building block. They continue the outlines that, taken together with successive Qur’anic sections, give this Ummah its unique features, its independent character, and its distinctive responsibilities. This Ummah was built incrementally; thus the present Qur’anic unit is a structured advance that takes the loyal and committed Muslims — loyal to the Prophet (ﷺ) and committed to Allah (ﷻ) — another step toward their responsibility of setting up a society whose affairs are regulated by Allah’s (ﷻ) social law in the same way that the affairs of nature are managed by His physical law.

This unit of instruction begins by explaining what the phases of the moon mean to man. Then it addresses a custom of *jāhiliyah* in which people would, on certain occasions, approach homes, not by requesting admission at the front door, but by casually going in through the back. After this admonition, it instructs the Muslims on the general rules and regulations of warfare, and of fighting during the *months of security*, especially at the holy *masjid* in Makkah. It winds down with an explanation of the rituals of Hajj and ‘Umrah as projected and polished by the Qur’an. All pre-Islamic traditions and customs were obliterated and terminated by these divine words.

Here, as elsewhere in the Qur’an, there are authoritative directions and instructions of an ideological and educational nature. Also there are guidelines of how certain rituals are to be performed along with commands for military readiness. All these are brought together in one lesson with an underpinning of *taqwá* — man’s fixation on Allah’s (ﷻ) subtle and severe staying power.

About the *jāhili* practice of approaching homes from the back and considering it an act of virtue, this lesson immediately corrects such misconception of virtue; virtue is not to be gauged by outward actions, but by a person's substance of *taqwá*,

Virtue, however, does not consist in your entering houses from the rear, [as it were] but truly virtuous is he who is aware [and on guard] of Allah]. Hence, enter houses through their doors, and remain conscious of Allah], so that you may be happy (2:189).

These *āyāt* coach the committed Muslims to avoid the initiation of hostilities. Then Allah (ﷻ) ties this to what He loves and detests, **“Allah does not love [antagonistic] aggressors.”** In His comments on fighting during the secure and sacred months, *al-ash-hur al-hurum*, Allah's (ﷻ) words continue to remind Muslims about the centrality of *taqwá* in their collective consciousness, **“but remain conscious of Allah, and know that Allah keeps company with those who are in such a way conscious of Him.”**

On disbursement of money and possessions, Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And persevere in doing good to perfection: behold, Allah loves the doers of good [who try to do it perfectly].”** Further, on some of the rituals of Hajj, He says, **“And remain conscious of Allah, and know that Allah is severe in retribution.”** The remark upon the schedule of Hajj and the prohibition of sexual relations (during Hajj), unrestrained behavior, and angry disputes is, **“And make provision for yourselves, but, verily, the best of all provisions is Allah's favor; remain, then, on alert [of My presence] O you who are aware.”**

Even in coaching people to evoke Allah's (ﷻ) name after the Hajj, the words of the Book are, **“Hence remain conscious of Allah, and know that unto Him you shall be gathered.”** The one binding thread in all of these *āyāt* is the building-up of *taqwá* in the nascent Muslim community. Without this all-important feature and characteristic, they would not be able to handle the weight of the heavy responsibilities that would soon engulf their every waking

moment. This model community for all generations to come had to viscerally integrate into their conscience and resulting behaviors the idea that help, counsel, answers, hope, and salvation can only come from Allah (ﷻ) — and Allah (ﷻ) alone. And so, as the nature of the weak human demands, the notice of *taqwá* and Allah's (ﷻ) ever-present power is repeated over and over again, reinforced on every occasion, every venue, and every devotional activity.

A broad range of issues come together in this multifaceted Qur'anic presentation, tied together and related to each other in the nature of this *dīn*. In it, there is no indication of a separation of rituals from feelings. Nor is either of these separated from community organization; and all are fused into the ultimate test of commitment and sacrifice: military behavior and conduct. The *āyāt* help dedicated Muslims feel that they are both in this world and in the *ākhirah* (the next world). The affairs of heart, society, and universe are blended into the construct of an Islamic order on earth. The Qur'an has a firm grip on reality and life. Its integrity and harmony shine through these *āyāt*. This is the nature of things when man has One divine authority who has endorsed for mankind one *dīn* — an integrated system that has no room for separation of “church and state,” segregation of values and politics, and sequestration of morality and militancy.

One remarkable development presents itself in this *sūrah*. As the new Muslims around the Prophet (ﷺ) began to acquire a sense of confidence with their new mission in life, and indeed with their own humanity, they began coming to him about an assortment of issues — issues they encountered as they adopted their new Islamic lifestyle. They wanted to know how they should proceed with their responsibilities in this unprecedentedly liberating ambiance. It also appears that the native nomad of Arabia was “coming alive,” beginning to think, to ask questions, and to seek answers.

“They ask about the phases of the moon...” Why so? Why does it begin as a sliver, then works itself up to a full moon? Only to recede back to the sliver from which it began? This cycle ends, and another one begins...the crescent recurs in cycles, but has it any meaningful relationship to man's life on earth?

These nomads of yesteryear then went on to ask, “What shall we spend? What portion of it? On whom or what?” As their maturity as a community increased, their questions made the transition from personal issues to larger social concerns. They asked about fighting during the sacred months at the sanctified and inviolable *masjid*, “Is it permissible to fight in certain months at a certain place?” And they did not stop there. As much as they wanted to know about how to manage an Islamic society, they wanted to know what could destabilize it. And thus these Arabians of the desert, after being charged with Islam, began to ask about intoxicants and gambling, knowing that the *jāhiliyah* they had just left was notorious for its vices, “What does Allah (ﷻ) have to say about drinking and gambling?”

They also asked about how to manage human relationships, even the most intimate one between a husband and a wife, and so they asked about menstruation, “What is our sexual relationship with our wives to be during this period?” Even the women, who were beginning to shed age-old notions of being owned like property and who were beginning to feel a new sense of liberation, would venture to ask such questions. And beyond this *sūrah* there are other questions about other topics that were addressed to the Prophet (ﷺ).

These questions have several logical implications. They show that the primitive Arabian life of prior years, with the advent of Islam, had been enhanced, taking on new vitality, and complexity. It means that there was a new and specific character to these Muslims. There was a new union of interests, purpose, and sympathy that distinguished this emerging Muslim society from its static and stagnant *jāhili* predecessor. From being self-centered individuals or polarized factions, these people had become, for the first time, an Ummah with an independent quality, self-respect, humility, social system, and a focal point — the Prophet (ﷺ) and his teachings — that brought everyone together. Every Muslim in this emerging order wanted to know how he fitted in and how to play his role. This was an individual and collective self-awareness that was unknown to those who made up the pre-Islamic *jāhili* hoi pol-

loi. Generally speaking the Islamic initiative of the Prophet (ﷺ) induced a new and unprecedented impetus for emotional, intellectual, and social maturity.

Another feature of those who sincerely pose questions (*wa yas'alūnaka*) is a scrupulous conscience. Islam had taken final hold of their souls and spirits. Everyone became cautious lest he do something at odds with this new feeling, new mood, and new surroundings. They not only abandoned the old ways of *jāhiliyah*, they also stripped themselves of the culture of *jāhiliyah*, and this may have been the hardest transition they had to make. They withdrew their trust from all that the crass materialist world stood for, and in Islam they looked to Allah's (ﷻ) Word to guide them. This is an act of faith; only true *īmān* can end a culture and replace it with an ideology. The transformation of cultural Arabians to ideological Arabs (*jāhils* to Muslims) made everything associated with *jāhiliyah* suspect and doubtful in the view of these new Muslims. This transformation was so deep and so moving that these new Muslims were constantly awaiting instructions from Allah (ﷻ) to show them how to proceed in life. Even if some part of the new instructions coming from Allah (ﷻ) were to coincide with some of the vestiges of the old *jāhili* order, the new psychology of Muslims would look at it not as an endorsement of their previous culture but as an element that happened to coincide with the old pattern of life. The fact was unmistakable: the core Islamic paradigm is irreconcilably different from the ways of *jāhiliyah*, or the ignocracy. This is also true about the rituals of Hajj. There were some details of Hajj that were not changed by the advent of Islam, but the concept and practice of Hajj were radically at odds with the Hajj of *jāhiliyah*.

Another implication has to do with the live events of that time period. Some Madinan Yahūd along with their Makkan *mushrik* sponsors were trying, from time to time, to cast doubt on the validity or practicality of Islamic moral, social, and legal arrangements. These detractors missed no opportunity to stir up a campaign of misinformation. An example is what happened to the expedition of 'Abdullāh ibn Jaḥsh and the propaganda that was generated about the Muslims violating their own rules against con-

ducting combat operations during the sacred months.¹⁷² This of course raised questions that had to be addressed in such a way that would maintain Muslim public confidence in its principled position, as well as take the sting out of undertones and aspersions. It would also mean that the clarifying words of the Qur'an were always there: refuting false statements and repelling ferocious attacks. These dishonest statements by the Yahūd and their *mushrik* friends were meant to tip the balance in favor of a descending *jāhiliyah* in opposition to an ascending Islam. Their denigrating defamations were cast into the Muslim minds at a time when their armies were shooting at Muslims to kill.

Since those days this war has known no respite. The forces at work within human nature are still the same. The enemies of the Muslim Ummah are still the same. And the Qur'an is still circulating. Human nature and the Muslim Ummah stand no chance in this ongoing war except to find solace in this compassionate Qur'an. This meaningful and purposeful Qur'an has to be in this war: with its import, its candor, and its accuracy. The significance of Allah's (ﷻ) immaculate words have to come alive in the middle of this uninterrupted war as they were alive in that initial war in Makkah and Madinah. The Muslims have been paying a heavy price for their negligence of the Qur'an and its high-spirited approach to the full-blown and fully-equipped enemies of the past and the present. Muslims can never be triumphant when they exclude the Qur'an from dictating the terms of this war.

This fact should have Muslims everywhere scrambling to realize these Qur'anic lessons with a sense of responsibility and a direction in life. The Qur'an should once again permeate the Muslim social reality with an intensity that begets a new world order, replacing the old order of material capitalism. The Qur'an belongs in this theatre of action where it tells the Ummah how to go about breaking the hands of oppressors and then reinstating the Islamic order, the same way it happened the first time around. The Qur'an was not meant to be only melodious, with beautiful words, elegant expressions, and captivating recitations; that is the least significant element of Qur'anic reality. Allah (ﷻ) did not

send us the Qur'an for aural pleasure; it was meant for us to launch a new way of living. The Qur'an is meant to mould our social and political realities. No one is above the Qur'an. Life is a challenge and the Qur'an is the only living document that can prepare us for that challenge.

The Qur'an Trumps Science as the Universal Reference Point

They will ask you about the new moons. Say, "They indicate a schedule of times for people, including [their performance of] the pilgrimage." However, virtue does not consist in your entering houses from the back end; but truly virtuous is he who is conscious of Allah [and His power presence on earth]. So enter houses through their doors, and remain conscious of Allah, so that you may be successful (2:189).

Some narratives relate that the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about the lunar phases, from a new moon to a full moon, and then back to a new moon again. Other narratives indicate that the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked "Why was the lunar cycle created?" So Allah (ﷻ) instructed His Prophet (ﷺ) to, **"Say, "They indicate a schedule of time for people and for the, pilgrimage."**

The lunar cycle regulates when Muslims go into *iḥrām* as they enter the precincts of Makkah for Hajj and 'Umrah. It also indicates when they should disrobe from this *iḥrām* as they leave Makkah and its precincts. The lunar cycle regulates the beginning and the end of all the 12 Islamic months, including Ramaḍān. It also regulates time-periods relating to *nikāḥ* (marriage), divorce, and *'iddah* (a woman's retreat or waiting-period after divorce or the death of her husband). It also provides a time-table for financial and commercial transactions, and other monetary activities. The Muslims' calendar is a lunar one that assigns different social and psychological seasons for individual, community, health, military, and many other activities.

Whatever the case is, the answer to their question was a practical, not a theoretical, answer. It speaks of what Muslims are expected to do in relation to the expansion and contraction of the Moon. The answer from Allah (ﷻ) to these inquisitive humans did not take the form of mathematical formulas so that they could calculate when and how these stages of the Moon occur. The Qur'an did not speak about the Moon's function in the Solar System or any other extra-terrestrial function of the Moon, even though all this could have been part of a broad answer to their question.

So what are the implications of the way their question was answered? First it must be emphasized that the Qur'an means to entrench in the human mind and soul a new and particular set of concepts, a new and particular type of society, and a new and particular structure. The Qur'an intends to be the author of a new *ummaḥ* on earth, an *ummaḥ* that is able to show the way and lead mankind. The Qur'an intends to found a prototype that will lay the foundations for a prosperous and loving humanity. The Qur'an is a book of principles and convictions with which a drifting humanity can find its way.

Imagine if the answer to such a question in the Qur'an had been a purely "scientific" answer. Such an answer would have provided astronomical data. But with the shallow scientific information available at that time, would any of those people have been able to make sense out of some scientific-mathematical formula that would explain the phases of the moon? Such a theoretical and mathematical answer would need an extensive build-up of scientific observations, discoveries, and inventions, all of which were obviously lacking at the time. Such a "scientific" reply in the Qur'an would have been an enigma and not an answer to their question.

Moreover, even if mankind had been ready for such an answer, it would not have contributed greatly to the practical erection of an Islamic world order. Detailed "scientific" replies are not the fiber of this divine Book. The Qur'an is not a book of astronomy, physics, or medicine, as some zealots try to make it, nor is it in conflict with science, as some accuse it of being.

Both these approaches bespeak an ignorance of what the Qur'an is meant to be. The Qur'an is centered in the human essence and it is located in the human condition. It intends to foster a broad concept of existence and the way we humans relate to Allah (ﷻ), our Creator. It defines where man is located in the arrangement of all things, natural and social, and how man is tasked by Allah (ﷻ). Life needs to be harnessed in a way that permits optimum input from the flourishing potential of man, including his moral gifts. Once this is done, the human mind puts all information into a constructive mode that excludes any clash between the meanings the mind discovers in the heavenly-inspired Qur'an and the meanings the mind discovers in the physical and material world. With this noble pursuit of the mind, a realization sets in that the mind's discoveries and inventions in the physical world are neither final, nor incontrovertible or indisputable.

Those who read, study, and think of the accessible meanings of the Qur'an should understand that the Qur'an is addressed to man: his perceptions and conceptions, his doctrines and belief-systems, his mental attitudes and political priorities, his convictions, his manners and behavior, his means and his ends, as well as — no less — his interactions with nature, other forms of life on earth, the environment, family, society, and everything with which he comes into contact. All such relationships and associations are concerns that the Qur'an addresses. As for physical sciences and technological advances, these are the outgrowth of the disciplined mind and cultivated character that the Qur'an nurtures, fosters, and prepares. After the Qur'an fashions the Islamic character, it releases within it all the potentials of the mind to hypothesize, theorize, experiment, discover, and invent all that is required, but within the moral and professional standards defined by Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). This is actually what is at the core of man's presence on earth: he is assigned with the role of *khalifah*. And his nature and disposition are made suitable for this purpose. The Qur'an maintains and sustains man's state of nature (*fitrah*). Whenever the forces of evil try to corrupt this *fitrah*, the Qur'an acts as a repellent or a shelter for this *fitrah* to enable it to avoid

being sabotaged by power, greed, lust, jealousy, monopoly, arrogance, and fear.

The Qur'an also places man's focus on his habitat because a healthy psychology cannot prosper and grow in an unhealthy ecology. There is an exchange of character between individuals and societies: the individual gains, consciously or subconsciously, some traits of the society he is in. Societies also gain some features of its individual members, who have the power to influence the larger social culture. The Qur'an looks at both these ends: individuals *and* societies, and cures them of their excesses and perversions so that all can return to the state of nature that Allah (ﷻ) meant them to be in. The more recognition of Allah (ﷻ) as Creator, Guide, Adviser, and Superior, the more these two components of organized life flourish. If man is able to communicate with the Qur'an at this level, he will get more out of the meanings of this hallowed Book. So when a reply, like the one in this *āyah*, is presented to the inquirers, they begin to be practical and thoughtful about their persona and purpose in life.

Some zealots try to attribute to the Qur'an figures, data, and scientific information that are not explicitly stated in the Qur'an. They try to relate contemporary scientific data to some of its *āyāt* in an attempt to bolster the standing of the Qur'an and to inflate the "credibility" of the Qur'an in their own eyes. Sometimes they come up with medical, chemical, astronomical, and other scientific details to try to impress themselves and others by what the Qur'an has to say.

The Qur'an is a book of integrity; its theme is of unbroken completeness and totality. The subject matter of the Qur'an is beyond and above all the "sciences." Man is expected to assimilate into the Qur'an. Research, trial and error, and applications are activities of the human mind, which is only a portion of the human entity, albeit a significant one. The Qur'an goes to all the components that, when put together, constitute the human being — mind included. The Qur'an builds man's identity, conscience, mind, and thoughts. The Qur'an also reconfigures human society in a way that is conducive to the optimum affluence of human productive

thought. After the Qur'anic imperative of augmenting a balanced and sound individual with a social order that encourages the prosperity of such an individual, the Qur'an opens up avenues for research, inquiries, explorations, and perceptual experiences. Trial and error become a form of *'ibādah*. Laboratories and workplaces for conducting scientific research become as sanctified as the *masjids* because the scientists and intellectuals are equipped with decent, faithful, and proper standards of deportment and responsibility.

As they are guidelines for the process of molding the Islamic character and building its balanced relationship with Allah (ﷻ), the absolute facts mentioned in the Qur'an about the universe cannot be suspended. Similarly, just because the contemporary mind holds such and such a hypothesis about celestial, terrestrial, or planetary arrangements, the Qur'an's faultless and incontrovertible facts cannot be shelved as anachronistic or irrelevant. The Qur'anic facts cannot be held hostage even to "scientific facts" because some of these "scientific facts" prove in the course of time to be transient. The works of such scientific luminaries as Nicolas Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, and Albert Einstein are examples of how "scientific facts" are, in truth, little more than interim observations of the human mind as it progresses from the primitive to the complex.¹⁷³ An example of this is the post-Newtonian theory of General Relativity, a theory of motion and energy derived almost entirely by Einstein. It generalized Newtonian notions of movement and the transformation of energy from a three-dimensional space (which works well for lower-velocity cases) to a four-dimensional space, where time represents the fourth dimension. Einstein's work, establishing that matter and energy are not necessarily distinct especially near the speed of light, was able to address some burning questions that were heretofore unanswered; and thus it became the genesis of modern inquiries into the origin of the universe, and what we know today as the space-time continuum. These inquiries have challenged some of Newton's assumptions and thereby his conclusions.

This is how "scientific facts," not to speak of the many hypotheses, theories, possibilities, assumptions, and postulates that

are marketed as “scientific,” pale in significance compared to Qur’anic facts. Many theories in modern astronomy and cosmology are still speculative and abstract. Then there are those so-called theories about man’s evolution and the sequence of events involved in the “evolutionary” development of a species or taxonomic group of organisms. And then add to that, in the officially sanctioned religion of secularism, “theories” about the human psyche and behavior. And on top of this are the compilation of “theories” about the origin and emancipation of societies. These “theories” only qualify as theories thanks to the force of secular power-politics that have anointed speculative thought with the rank of “scientific theory.” These intellectual conjectures are not scientific facts at all. They are simply conjectures or predictions. Their value is in the fact that they offer explanations of psychological or social phenomena until a new set of explanations is able to explicate a wider variety of observations. In this manner the previous scientific “fact” is supplanted by the more sophisticated and the more inclusive new “scientific theory.” This is what Einstein did to Newton, and what a future “genius” will do to Einstein. This ongoing maturation of scientific knowledge can have no end because man will continue to discover new things that he was not aware of before, or that he had not understood before.

So every attempt to set aside the general and well-established meanings of the *āyāt bayyināt* in the Qur’an until science is able to satisfy the curiosity of the mind, when science itself is undergoing an evolutionary process through the human medium of reasoning, is a fundamental mistake in approaching the meanings of the Qur’an. This is something that must be well understood before Muslims engage those who try to give the Qur’an “credibility” by means of technical, mathematical, or quantitative data.

First of all, these credibility seekers are weak-minded people whose understanding about the relative position of the Qur’an and science is flawed. They think that science is supreme and the Qur’an’s role is to corroborate it or support it. From this assumption they proceed to try to validate the meanings of the Qur’an by science. The Qur’an is an integrated and consolidated whole that

is in no need of scientific confirmation. Rather it is science itself that needs to be substantiated because it keeps moving from one theory to another. Science needs a reference point, especially one that is not highly agendized or hijacked by material and class interests. In the recent past, with an erroneous reference point, science “proved” that one race was superior to another, and today it is busy searching for a gene that apparently predisposes a person to homosexual behavior. How can anyone expect this kind of erratic meandering, driven as it is by ideological materialism and institutional opportunism, to substantiate what is right, true, and absolute?

Everything that is stated by science is subject to review and revision, because science is a human activity. Human beings’ minds and instruments are the matrix of science. That being the case, finite man will never be able to produce infinite science; man will never be able to produce eternal facts.

Second, these “science firsters” are unable to understand the nature and function of the Qur’an soundly and thoroughly. They cannot understand that the Qur’an is an eternal and absolute force that aims to shape a human who is in harmony with the composition of existence and the presence of divinity within reality. Man in the image of the Qur’an is no longer at odds with his surroundings. Man becomes an accessory to the embedded formulas in life around him. This is the area of man’s *khilāfah* on earth when he is unimpeded by the forces of the status quo, forces that will use all types of “theories” to prevent human beings from reaching this lofty liberation that is enabled by the Qur’an. With this free mind and spirit, man can approach the whole world as a laboratory for his experiments, observations, and analyses. Man should never accept materialistic speculations about man, life, existence, God, and the universe as bona fide “scientific theories.”

Third, there are those, who try their best to presume that the meanings in the Qur’an coincide with scientific explanations. In the process they load Qur’anic *āyāt* with meanings and assumptions that are derived from the latest postulates and positions of modern scientists and researchers, forgetting that these will be eclipsed by the postulates of future scientists and researchers. In this process

the Qur'an becomes second-fiddle to what the people are saying and then counter-saying. This insults the majesty and the glory of the Qur'an. Individuals who are busy cross-referencing the words of Allah (ﷻ) with the words of modern scientists are wasting time, to put it mildly.

Let not this objective criticism be confused with ridiculing or belittling science. Huge strides are being made in shedding rational light on the universe. Science is a "helping hand" in understanding the *āyāt* of the Qur'an. Of course science is a human accomplishment that should be valued by everyone who appreciates the fruits of human endeavor. Never will a Muslim who understands the Qur'an disparage science. How can he, when Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an,

In time We shall make them fully understand Our *āyāt* [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves, so that it will become clear to them that this [revelation] is indeed the truth (41:53).

This *āyah* should be enough to persuade every listening Muslim to tune into the latest scientific developments in fields from cosmology to genetics and everything in between. Science no doubt can help to expand our understanding of the Qur'an. How does science fill in the curious mind's exploration of Qur'anic meanings?

The Qur'an declares, "**And He created everything and calibrated it with precision**" (25:2). Many years after this *āyah* was revealed, the human mind discovered through scientific observation and measurement that there are precise calculations and observable coordinations in the way the universe has been constructed. The scientific mind realized that the configuration of planet Earth and its gauged distance from the Sun, as well as the distance that separates the Moon from the Earth, and then the volume of both the Sun and the Moon in comparison to Earth's, as well as the speed of movement, velocity and orbit; as well as the Earth's terrain, the Earth's axis, the Earth's polar areas, the climate, the seasons; and thousands of other features are all conducive and

contributive to life. All of these thousands upon thousands of details cannot be products of random chance. These human observations obviously help us to appreciate the words of Allah (ﷻ) when He says, **“And He created everything and calibrated it with precision.”** Scientific activity becomes a necessity to fertilize some of the meanings of the Qur’an.

It is perfectly acceptable, indeed, absolutely necessary to admit human experience and the “mind’s eye” when they illuminate the broader implications of a Qur’anic *āyah*. The more we pool human knowledge and experience from all societies, the richer our understanding of these immutable *āyāt* will become. The Qur’an is a book that speaks to the mind as well as the heart. No Muslim will ever reach solid ground by denying the intimate connections between reason and revelation.

Science without a Qur’anic axis to revolve around can lead people into the wilderness, not out of it. So let us briefly take a sample of where the “scientifically” consenting minds go wrong when they try to align the meanings of *āyāt* with interpretations of “science.” The errorless Qur’an states, **“Indeed, We create man from a careful selection of clay” (23:12).**

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace postulated a theory of evolution as a gradual directional change;¹⁷⁴ now it is most commonly used to refer to the cumulative changes in the characteristics of populations of organisms from generation to generation. Darwin’s successors say that evolution occurs by the fixation of changes in the structure of the genetic material, and the passing-on of these changes from ancestors to descendants. It is, they tell us, well demonstrated over geological time by the sequence of organisms preserved in the fossil record. Assertions such as “well demonstrated” imply a degree of agreement amongst the researchers and theorists. However, in this case, these scientists cannot agree among themselves and hypothesize in two opposing schools of thought about the pattern and the tempo of evolution. The *phyletic gradualist school* is based on a model of evolution in which species change incrementally through time by slow directional change within a lineage, producing a long and graded series of differing forms. The

punctuated equilibria school is based on a model in which species are relatively stable and long-lived in geological time; new species are said to appear during outbursts of rapid speciation, followed by the differential success of certain of the newly formed species.¹⁷⁵

Reacting to the intrusion of this mantra into the public education system, the creationist community, which has steadily been losing ground because it has been relying on the Bible and because the preponderant force of the material establishment is behind the evolutionists, came up with the Theory of Intelligent Design, referring to a core intelligence behind the differentiation and the origin of the species. Under pressure from the atheistic Darwinists, many of whom are eminent scientists and professors, the creationists fail to explicitly mention God, however this is the implication. If they were to assert that God is the intelligent designer, they would not be able to make claims that this theory should be taught along with Darwinian evolution in public school classrooms, because of the separation of church and state dogma. This enigma for the creationists alludes to the power of the Darwinians as it corresponds to shaping public views about evolution. And so despite the efforts of the creationists, the Darwinian approach to evolution dominates the public discourse and education.

Can anyone ever really claim that this theory of Darwinism explains the words of Allah (ﷻ)? Are we to believe that life really began with a single aqueous cell that, throughout geological ages, evolved until it finally gave birth to human life? Is this how we are supposed to understand the Qur'an? Is this theory, which keeps on being modified, an interpretation of creationism in the Qur'an? And which modification are we supposed to be satisfied with? Or is the final definitive version of this theory still geological ages away? And should our understanding of the Qur'an be put on hold until that age arrives?

Any thinking mind can see that this theory has been modified, and continues to be modified, so many times that if one was to adjust his understanding of the Qur'an to accommodate each version, he would be constantly changing his position and ultimately discard the Qur'an altogether. This theory is neither absolute nor final. This

whole schism in the human mind can be traced back to the European battle between science and sorcery that eventually culminated in the mind of Isaac Newton, and which still lives with humanity today, even among Muslims who ought to know better. The most vociferous representatives of this stream of thought are the scientific materialists. They think that science is identical with their philosophy, which is why they accept Darwinism uncritically and believe they can understand everything if they have a complete theory of particle physics. Newton, as a proponent of metaphysical open-mindedness, thought that any theory can be tested empirically.

The price of empirical verification is high, however. It is that scientists have to admit to the public, and to themselves, that there are innumerable important questions they cannot answer yet, including the mystery of how complex organisms came into existence. Newton may have been the last of the sorcerers; he went down some strange paths, but he tried to make his inquiries genuinely scientific. Some admirers have called Charles Darwin “the Newton of biology.” It would be more appropriate to say that Darwin was the Sigmund Freud of biology, because, like Freud, he was a man with brilliant ideas and a persuasive manner who deliberately framed his theory in such a way that it could evade true empirical testing. His successors have followed his example. It is probably too much to hope that they will be the last of the alchemists.

By contrast, the Qur’anic fact is absolute, eternal and final. It may or may not tolerate these transient observations and theories of scientists and researchers. The *āyah* above states the origin of man’s advent. It does not go into any details about that advent or genesis. The *āyah* is undiminished in the meaning it delivers; to this end the *āyah* is thorough and convincing.

In another *āyah* the Qur’an states, “**And [they have a sign in] the Sun in its running its course...**” (36:38). The current scientific understanding of the Sun’s movement is that it is moving through space in the direction of Vega (also known as Alpha Lyrae).¹⁷⁶ The motion of the group of stars of which the Sun is a member is moving about the galactic center of the Milky Way with an orbital velocity of about 220 kilometers per second. These astro-

nomical observations do not constitute the exhaustive meaning of this *āyah*. Science provides relative information that remains short of irrevocable fact, whereas the unerring *āyah* in the Qur'an is the concluding truth of the matter: the Sun is in motion, and that is the crux of the issue. The Qur'anic *āyah* should not be made a prisoner of human observations and analyses.

The Qur'an also says, **“Are, then, they who deny the truth [of Allah’s power] not aware that the heavens and the earth were [once] a fusion, which We then parted asunder?” (21:30).** In this regard there is a scientific theory suggesting that at one time the Earth was part of the Sun, but as time went by, billions of years, the Earth was separated from the Sun. Should the Qur'anic *āyah* be forced to fit into this hypothesis? And then, should it be claimed that this particular scientific theory *explains* this *āyah*? Of course not. The eternal *āyah* cannot be explained by such elaborate hypotheses or theories because these hypotheses and theories are both limited and not final. In fact, there are several competing theories about the origins of the Earth. But the Qur'anic *āyah* is final and conclusive. It says that the Earth (*al-ard*) was forced apart from the cosmos (*al-samā'*). How? What is the nature of this cosmos or heaven or firmament that is being cited? This the *āyah* does not tell. So it is premature to say that scientific speculations are the conclusive meaning of the *āyah*.

All of this does not imply that science or technology will necessarily be our undoing. However, as technology has outstripped our ability to reason ethically about it, it is worth considering how successful this age of science has really been. After all, the scientific method knows only one truth: precise, mathematical equations underlie all things. But has science really answered the fundamental questions of our existence? The answer, of course, is no. By trying to explain everything, the worshippers of science have overlooked the most important things. In this sense they are not unlike the little boy who cut open his drum to see what made it bang.

But still we find ourselves in a situation that is begging to be addressed by competent Muslims. This practical state of affairs is most pronounced at the beginning and the ending of the lunar

months, especially Ramaḍān and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. **“They ask you about the lunar cycles. Say, “They indicate a schedule of time for people and for the pilgrimage.”**

With all the aforementioned reservations about placing the meanings of the *āyāt* of the Qur’an in scientific straitjackets, we are nonetheless duty bound to use our minds so that we can understand the meanings that are conveyed by the Qur’an to the human mind. This process takes place through investigation, experimentation, exploration, discovery, and invention. We are expected to enrich the meanings of the Qur’an with all the rational and logical faculties of the human mind as it matures through the ages and generations. So our cumulative knowledge should be enough for us to determine when a lunar month begins and when a lunar month ends, without the controversy, tension, dissension, and divisive opposition that has become so routine. There is enough information about the lapse in time between sunset and moonset to indicate that if there is more than 45 minutes to an hour, then in all likelihood the crescent should be visible. Other cumulative knowledge and experience indicates that if the crescent’s age is in the range of 18–24 hours, after the birth of the moon, then the likelihood of seeing the crescent is strong. But given that this time window is keyed to the definition of the “new moon,” it is often deceptive as it does not account for other physical conditions; and for this reason, Muslim astronomers have determined that the two most important variables for sightability are (1) the *angular separation* of the Moon from the Sun as seen from Earth, and (2) the Moon’s *altitude* above the horizon. Thus for the visibility of the *hilāl*, the angular separation should be at least 10–12 degrees and the altitude should be over 10 degrees.¹⁷⁷ With this information now widely available, Muslims should have something resembling a harmonious beginning and ending of Ramaḍān and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. But the governments in the Muslim world are not interested enough in this *āyah* or this Qur’an to allow Muslims to begin and end their scheduled devotions in an accurate and satisfying way; they must be kept in a continual state of uncertainty so that they cannot apply themselves to their higher responsibilities.

What sense is there in adopting a Saudi schedule of Ramaḍān when the Saudi government has been habitual in its systematic foul-up, almost always beginning one day before the actual lunar month begins and ending one day before the lunar month ends? In other words, everyone who follows the Saudi calendar fasts the last day of Sha'bān and celebrates 'Īd al-Fiṭr on the last day of Ramaḍān. Science is not infallible, but it is not ignorant either. There is no excuse for anyone to pretend that in today's world the orbit of the Moon around the Earth is still a closed book. No Muslim can afford to agree any longer with the late grand *mufti* of Saudi Arabia who held that the earth is flat!¹⁷⁸

Governments in Muslim countries have not been able to put together a committee of competent Muslim scholars (*faqīhs*, 'alims, astrophysicists, astronomers, and meteorologists, among others) who are capable of running the Islamic lunar calendar. In some years, Muslims have celebrated the end of Ramaḍān ('Īd al-Fiṭr) on three different days. How can this be? Muslims have become the laughing stock of the non-Muslims. How shameful a conduct when they are supposed to be the upholders of revelation and rationality, of scripture and of common sense.

The new moon in Islamic terminology has always been defined by the *visibility* of the crescent. So how is it now possible for Muslims to allow the Saudi Arabian government to tell them that the new moon is defined by the Western standard, that is, the *birth of the new moon* when the Moon is totally shadowed by the Earth and is not visible at all?! What a *bid'ah*! Unfortunately and to our great humiliation as Muslims, this same government has found willing scholars-for-dollars who parrot the Saudi line on this issue. They say in effect, "Why should anyone be concerned? Why should anyone hesitate to follow the Saudis' lead? If the Saudi government is wrong it shall bear the burden of this universal mistake." This would be true if the Saudi government were known for its honesty, integrity, and principled position on Islamic matters. But the Saudi government is a habitual traitor on Islamic matters, issues, and causes. How can anyone take their word for anything? Muslims should not be simpletons who follow "Simon says" or "Saudi says"

on matters of conviction, commitment, and established consensus in the Ummah.

However, virtue does not consist in your entering houses from the back, but virtuous is he who is conscious of Allah [and His power presence on earth]. Hence enter houses through their doors and remain conscious of Allah so that you may be successful (2:189).

It appears that the society in which this Qur'an was revealed (Arabia) had some cultural accretions that were linked to the Moon's phases. One of these is mentioned here by the Qur'an; and it is specific to the society in Madinah. To recount some history, the whole affair of Hajj can be traced to Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ); and all the traditions and customs that grew out of the Hajj became the cultural epic that the Arabians were so proud of. In this regard and by virtue of a tradition whose value may have lapsed, a strong argument, in the *jāhili* world of things, could be made for the demonstration of piety or purity in the conduct of people who approached residences from their back doors immediately after returning from Hajj. Information has it that the Madinan Muslims were observing this post-Abrahamic or pre-Islamic tradition. It is reported in the Two Ṣaḥīḥs that the Anṣār, after performing their Hajj, would not enter their homes by the front doors. One of them, though, did just that. He entered his home by its front door, only to have some people find fault with his non-conforming behavior on the basis of the pre-Islamic culture. To this end the Qur'an had to sweep out of the new Islamic ideological milieu such cultural and social traditions, so this *āyah* was revealed.

Other narrations of hadith indicate the Madinan Muslims were in the habit of expressing their "virtue" not only in a "heads-down" entry into a home from the backdoor after Hajj but also after returning from a long voyage. Whether they practiced this cultural norm after returning from a voyage or in the aftermath of the Hajj, these Muslims who were tainted by culture assumed that in doing so they were expressing their virtue and

moral excellence. There may be other societies around the world that tag on to the performance of Hajj some of their own cultural habits, parallel to what the Muslims of Madinah did during that initial phase of Islam. But the Qur'an lays all such practices to rest. Such acts of "topical piety" have no basis and are of no substantial value. The Qur'an in this instance means to reposition virtue and moral excellence into its social framework, and away from traditional habits. Allah (ﷻ) has no need for empty rituals that have no socially redemptive value. Just like in the *āyah*, "**Virtue is not in your [topical or mechanical] facing toward the east or west...**" (2:177).

Here the Qur'an wants Muslims to understand that *birr* (virtue) is the behavior that man shows out of realizing the splendid and overwhelming power of Allah (ﷻ), that is, *taqwá*. When Allah (ﷻ) dwells in man's conscience, in his private and public life, in his feelings and thoughts, in his intentions and purposes, then man has the ingredients of virtue in his attitude and deportment. No type of formality — cultural, social, or legal — can substitute for this fact. Such formalities become artificial or imitative.

Allah (ﷻ) wants Muslims to understand that what counts is the motivation and inspiration underlying one's exterior or surface performance. It is the *taqwá* impulse that sustains a person's behavioral commitment to Allah (ﷻ). Cultural accretions are void of such inspirational depth and content of *imān*. This *āyah* went from a physical focus on the phases of the Moon to a mental focus on the fact of *taqwá*. Between the two ends there were issues of timing, determining the beginnings and ends of months that are ritual or *'ibādah-specific*, and the Hajj; as well as virtue, outward behavior, and cultural practices. All this was done in one short *āyah*.

Keeping time and managing time is an essential part of human life; it is a natural part of human existence altogether. Man depends on it as much as he needs air to breathe or water to drink. It is because of the passage of time that man is able to classify and catalogue events in the past, the present, and the future. For this reason, man over the ages has used various systems to record the passage of time, to give a reference point to historical information,

and to plan out his daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly activities. All ancient and modern time-keeping systems, to various degrees of accuracy, are keyed to the relative motions of the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon. The fact that the motions of these three bodies in space are consistent and repeatable over a certain interval makes the notions of predictability in the future — for example, weather patterns over the course of the coming year — and extrapolation in the past — for instance, carbon dating for geological and anthropological purposes — possible. A calendar, which is based on the choice of a time-keeping system, is simply a time-scheduling mechanism that organizes days into weeks, weeks into months, months into years, and years into centuries.

All time-keeping systems are based on a reference point — usually a seminal event that is not necessarily coincidental with the starting point of the calendar associated with the system — and a reference interval, usually a solar year, a lunar month, or some combination of the two. Six of the major time-keeping systems in use today are listed in Table 1. Of all these time-keeping systems, the

Table 1: Major time-keeping systems in use today.

Calendar	Reference Point	Interval	Current Year
Persian	the Hijrah	solar year	1388
Gregorian	Easter	solar year	2009
Chinese	not agreed upon	lunisolar ^a	4706 ^b
Hindu	not agreed upon	lunisolar	5111 ^b
Jewish	beginning of creation	lunisolar	5770
Islamic	the Last Message	lunar month	1430

a. typically lunisolar months follow the phases of the Moon; the lunar year is used exclusively to mark the dates whereas the solar year is used to mark the months and maintain parallelism with the seasons. However these designations vary depending on the calendar.

b. according to Hindu and Chinese time-keepers, these are good estimates, but not agreed upon.

only calendar for which the precise reference point is known to the day, and that requires no intercalation (the adding of days or months to a “leap” year in order to keep parallel with the solar year) is the Islamic calendar. In his farewell *khuṭbah*, the Prophet (ﷺ) was known to have said,

*O People, the deniers of Allah’s power indulge in tampering with the calendar [intercalation] in order to make permissible that which Allah forbade, and to forbid that which Allah has made permissible. The time has now returned to the position it was in when Allah created the heavens and the earth with a year of twelve months. Four of them are sacred: Dhū al-Qa’dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, and al-Muḥarram; and Rajab, which lies between Jumādā and Sha’bān.*¹⁷⁹

This would make the Islamic calendar the one that is most scientifically accurate. Add to this the fact that the Islamic calendar is the only one that is divested from all elements of overt and parenthetical *shirk*, such as how the days of the week and the months of the year are named. However, Muslims still do not have confidence in the use of this calendar, despite the fact that this is the one that is endorsed by Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ).

Every year Muslims typically rely on the Islamic calendar for the ritual observances of Ramaḍān and Hajj, and the corresponding religious holidays of the two ‘Īds; for the rest of the year and for all their routine and other important activities, the majority of the Muslims around the world rely on the Gregorian calendar, and to a lesser extent the Persian and Chinese calendars. When the time for Ramaḍān begins to roll around this year (1430AH), the Muslims will be heard asking each other, “When is the first day of Ramaḍān, August 21st, or is it the 22nd?” or “Is the ‘Īd on the 20th of September or the 21st?” And because Islam for the majority of Muslims has become a set of empty rituals, the Islamic calendar has become a sort of bad universal joke that is used to poke fun at Islamic standards in a way that expresses their invalidity for the modern world. In point of fact, the first day of Ramaḍān is the first

day of the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; its beginning every year is determined by the sighting of the visible *hilāl*, and so it is with all the other Islamic months. The delineation for the start of each month is determined by the relative position of the Moon with the Earth, such that the first visibility of the crescent moon is observable. It is not keyed to the Gregorian calendar, nor is it determined by that calendar, nor should it be.

What excuses do Muslims offer for not using the Islamic time-keeping system in their daily lives? Some say that there is too much uncertainty in when the Islamic months start, and because this differs from country to country, to plan events and make schedules becomes problematic. Others say that it is just not used in their workplaces and in their other areas of association; in this case it would be cumbersome for them to switch back and forth all the time. And still others point to it being anachronistic in a world that has “switched” to the solar year as a “standard” interval for keeping time. The so-called “common” calendar in the world today is the Gregorian or Christian calendar. A closer look at the Western experience of keeping time, and why they do it as they do, in light of the above excuses offered by Muslims, will help to reveal what the right answers are.

First, with regard to the issue of uncertainty, which is the basis of most of the arguments against the Islamic time-keeping system, those who choose the solar or lunisolar scheme to determine a year do so to stay in step with the seasons, meaning that a particular month will correspond, every year, to a precise position of the Earth with respect to its orbit around the Sun. This approach ensures that for those who have multiple seasons during the year, the Spring and Fall seasons will occur in roughly the same months each year. In order to achieve this pattern, the solar year of 365+ days, corresponding to one revolution of the Earth around the Sun, is divided into 12 semi-equal pieces, or months. Those who use the strictly solar scheme (Gregorian and Persian) *arbitrarily* decide what the length of each month is going to be: 28, 29, 30, or 31 days. Whether a particular month is going to be 30 or 31 days has no scientific basis; it is just a definition. Also, because the solar year is

just a little bit longer than 365 days — 365.242 days to be exact — this extra one-quarter of a day begins to add up and thus to stay in step with the seasons, an extra, or intercalary, day has to be added every four years. In the Gregorian calendar, every year with 366 days is called a *leap year*; and the choice to add the extra day to February, making it 29 days in a leap year, is again arbitrary.

Typically, in the lunisolar systems (Jewish, Hindu, and Chinese), the lunar months are used to keep track of dates and the solar year is used to keep track of the seasons; thus in this scheme an *intercalary* month is added every two or three years, with the result that some (solar) years end up having 13 months. Or said another way, lunisolar systems correct the accruing error, with respect to keeping track of the solar year and thus the seasons, every two or three years. However, in record-keeping, the intercalary month is given the same number as the month preceding it.

By contrast, there is nothing arbitrary about the Islamic calendar. Every month is either 29 or 30 days, because the average length of the *synodic month* is 29.531 days.¹⁸⁰ The extra half day is absorbed into the consideration that each recordable month in terms of whole days will either be 29 or 30 days, and this is determined precisely by the visibility of the observable crescent: *it is an observation, not a definition*. Thus the time-keeper never has to worry about a cumulative error, and thereby never has a need for intercalation. Furthermore, because of the regular and consistent motion of the Moon with respect to the Earth, the visibility of the crescent is predictable to a very high degree of accuracy, especially with modern technologies and instrumentation.

Second, all Muslims who live in the world today, need to ask themselves the question: what is the necessity in the modern world of keying the calendar to the change of seasons? For ancient agrarian and migratory cultures, this may have been important because it was necessary to be able to accurately predict when to plan for the harvest, or when to get ready to move to warmer climates during the winter season. In the modern world, it may also be important due to the seasonal movement of goods and seasonal trends related to the sale of clothing and the provision of services such as

chimney cleaning, for instance. The 23.5-degree axial tilt of the Earth with respect to the Sun is responsible for the change of seasons, the equinoxes and the solstices; but given the fact that modern science understands, to an extremely high degree of precision, the exact position of the Earth with respect to the Sun, and the fact that the solar calendar is keyed to these positions requiring the addition of intercalary days every four years, why is it still necessary to define months that arbitrarily have 28, 30, and 31 days? And further, now that the modern West is in the post-industrial information age, a round-the-clock 24/7 culture — no longer an agrarian one — why is it necessary to maintain a time-keeping system that stays in step with the seasons? The answer is simple: expense and a traditional psycho-social antipathy to Islam.

The expense argument suggests that it would be too expensive to change over to another system, given that all the schedules, programs, technologies, and institutions of society function with the Gregorian system as a time-management basis. This argument has merit, but not for the Muslims. They are commanded to use the Islamic time-keeping system by the words of the Prophet (ﷺ); it is the only system of maintaining time that is harmoniously integrated into the Islamic way of life. Using any other system would not only be too expensive for them, but more importantly it would signal an avoidance of their duty to Allah (ﷻ).

As for the traditional psycho-social antipathy to Islam, consider the fact that the seminal reference point for the Gregorian calendar, Easter, never occurred. No crucifixion or execution of Jesus (ﷺ) ever took place. This is a fact according to Allah's (ﷻ) incontrovertible words quoted earlier in *āyāt* 4:155–158. Yet this represents the start of the Gregorian calendar. What does this say about the accuracy of historical dates and records? In fact the Gregorian calendar is not based on Easter at all; rather it is based on human *attempts* to figure out when exactly Easter took place, the last one being the papal decree of Pope Gregory XIII (1582), after whom the calendar is named.¹⁸¹ He corrected the Julian calendar, which was being used for 1,500 years, because it had a built-in error, causing it to gain one day for every 128 years; thus he shortened

one year by 10 days and ordered a few other changes that would ensure accuracy to within one day for every 3,323 years. Strangely enough, the Catholic Church used to maintain a tabular lunar calendar, primarily to calculate the date of Easter! And why were they doing this? Because, during Europe's Middle Ages, when the Church and the Holy Roman Empire were busy adding to or subtracting hundreds of days from their solar time-keeping system, the only time-keeping system of record was the Islamic one. For a thousand years, this was the most accurate way of knowing when events occurred in the past, and when to plan for events in the future. And given its record of historical accuracy, its minimal but manageable uncertainty, and its quality of not needing intercalation, why would anyone want to trash the Islamic time-keeping approach? Given its obvious religious, scientific, and historical value, why would anyone who has experience with it want to abandon it?

Add to this all the cultural accretions that are a byproduct of the corruption of Christianity by virtue of its interaction with the secularism, animism, and hedonism of Rome. The major Christian holidays coincide roughly with the spring equinox (Easter) and the winter solstice (Christmas). Before Christmas, the pagan cultures used to characterize the winter solstice as the Festival of the Sun, harkening in longer days alluding to the onset of Spring when seeding and planting would begin. These times of the year have nothing to do with the events of Easter or Christmas. Also, consider the days of the week and the months of the year in the Gregorian system:

1. Sunday: Day of the Sun
 2. Monday: Day of the Moon
 3. Tuesday: Day of Tiw, a god of war
 4. Wednesday: Day of Woden, a chief god
 5. Thursday: Day of Thonar, a god of the sky
 6. Friday: Day of Fria, a goddess of love
 7. Saturday: Day of Saturn
-
1. January: from Janus, a god of beginnings
 2. February: from Februss, an Italian god
 3. March: from Mars, a god of war and agriculture

4. April: from Aphro, a goddess of love
5. May: from Maiesta, a goddess of honor
6. June: from Juno, an Italian goddess
7. July: after Julius Caesar
8. August: after Augustus Caesar
9. September: from septem (seven)
10. October: from octo (eight)
11. November: from novem (nine)
12. December: from decem (ten)¹⁸²

In all instances, *shirk* is interwoven in the whole approach, from the largest institution down to the smallest detail that people ordinarily dismiss as insignificant, such as how the entire society manages time. And when these people who think they know how to manage the world, along with the perfunctory Muslims who just follow along, are told to obey Allah (ﷻ) and commit to the right way of doing things, they say the same thing that has been said for ages to those who speak the truth,

And thus it is: whenever We sent, before your time, a warner to any community, those of its people who had lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures would always say, “Behold, we found our forefathers agreed on a directional course, and, verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow!” [Whereupon each prophet] would say, “Why, even though I bring you guidance better than that which you found your forefathers on?” [To which] they would reply, “Behold, we deny that there is any truth in [what you claim to be] your messages!” (43:23–24).

And now after all this confusion in the Western experience of managing time, which is rooted in a proclivity for rejecting Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance, those who control by means of institutional obfuscation are introducing more *fitnah* into the equation. With the emerging dominance of secularism are also coming new ways to “standardize” time-keeping. Whether they are proposing 13-month calendars or

perpetual ones where every year starts on the same day, they still have to rely on intercalary days or weeks in order to make things work according to unsubstantiated desires to stay in step with the seasons. Why do not these people just listen to Allah (ﷻ)? Things would be a lot simpler. And this is where Muslims can provide a sense of stability, presence, and distinctiveness. Allah (ﷻ) makes it very clear,

Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, [laid down] in Allah’s decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; [and] out of these, four are sacred: this is the ever-true law [of Allah]. Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these [months]. And fight against those who ascribe divinity to any beside Allah, all together — just as they fight against you, [O Muslims], all together — and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him. The intercalation [of months] is but one more instance of [their] refusal to acknowledge the truth, [a means] by which those who are bent on denying the truth are led astray. They declare this [intercalation] to be permissible in one year and forbidden in [another] year, in order to conform [outwardly] to the number of months which Allah has hallowed; and thus they make allowable what Allah has forbidden. Goodly seems unto them the evil of their own doings, since Allah does not grace with His guidance people who refuse to acknowledge the truth (9:36–37).

The main issue here for Muslims is uncertainty (about the beginning of each Islamic month) complicated by a historical lack of confidence in Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). It has been shown above that the Gregorian or common calendar has embedded right within it at least as much, if not a lot more, uncertainty than the Islamic calendar. The key point to be made for Muslims is that it is not uncertainty itself that is threatening, it is how you

manage it that is important. There is uncertainty in everything; man only becomes comfortable with uncertainty once he learns how to manage it, and then he does not think about it again. This is what the proponents of the Gregorian calendar do better than the Muslims. They have figured out how to manage not only the inherent uncertainty of the motions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth, but also the uncertainty that results from flawed assumptions. And on top of that, they have broadly communicated their management scheme to all sectors of society who deem this to be important, and because of this, few people rarely think about it.

Why is it impossible for the Muslims to do the same thing? The main reason is that we do not have an Islamic executive authority that represents us. In order to pull this off on a universal level for all Muslims across the world, a universal Islamic leadership is needed. The other reason is that Muslims are not used to employing the Islamic calendar on a daily basis; they do not plan with it and they do not schedule with it. When Muslims begin to use the Islamic calendar to record, for example, a dentist appointment, the first day of school, a wedding, or business itineraries, then they will be on their way to demanding that an Islamic leadership institutionalize their way of keeping time.

And this is the best way for Muslims. Islamic time-keeping is an integrated part of the Islamic totality; no other way of managing time will do. It is integrated into the greater Islamic imperative of universal justice, balance, and equity for all people. Consider how Ramaḍān occurs in a different season every decade. Those who have a short fast in some years will have a longer fast in others, and vice-versa. So, no Muslim on earth will be constrained to have a perpetually long fast if he stays in one place all his life, and simultaneously, no Muslim will have the luxury of having a perpetually short fast. Those who have ambulatory problems or are elderly could plan the Hajj in a season where the weather in Makkah is relatively cooler compared to other hotter months. Then there are certain days that are more valuable than other days: all the days of Ramaḍān, the last ten nights of Ramaḍān, Laylah al-Qadr, the first ten days of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, and

Yawm ‘Arafāt. But with the constant back-and-forth between the Gregorian and Islamic dates, and the unforgiveable callousness of governments in Muslim countries in this regard, it is almost impossible to place these mercy-filled days in the right spot. On these days, more of Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy is made available to errant and wayward human beings. These are the days to be taken advantage of, and thus it is important to know exactly when they occur. And benefits like these are all in keeping with Allah’s (ﷻ) plan of being meticulous about justice in the same way that He is liberal with His mercy.

To end this discourse on the phases of the Moon, consider the fact that, central though this issue is to the times and days in which we render our ‘*ibādāt*: fasting, Hajj, *zakāh*, ‘*iddah*, divorce issues, etc., we, the Muslims of the world, do not have enough control of our own resources to have an observatory that belongs to us. There is not one single observatory with state-of-the-art instruments and cutting-edge technology that we could rely upon to determine the visibility of the *hilāl* (crescent). This situation begs the question yet again: what are officials in Muslim countries doing with Muslim wealth? How come Muslims the world over do not have the instruments, and associated buildings for conducting astronomical research of any kind? Why are they left to wonder and to be confused at least three times every year: the beginning and end of the month of Ramaḍān as well as the beginning of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah (which would tell them when the 10th day, the day of ‘Īd al-Aḍḥá, is)? Independent and qualified Muslim scholars remain at a loss every year about why the Muslim public is not being given true and accurate information concerning the Islamic calendar. Muslims should begin to feel the need to take control of such decision-making, to take control of their wealth, and to take control of the media, so that they will not have manifold ‘Īds.

It is not enough to have an independent observatory supervised by trustworthy ‘alims; Muslims also need an independent means to communicate such information to the rest of the Muslims in the world. So they must have radio transmitters, broadcasting stations, satellites, and so on. By now it should be common knowledge

among all Muslims that none of this is possible unless an independent Islamic authority and government is representing Muslims. Some of the governments and regimes in Muslim lands today play politics with this issue. If, for instance, the government in Egypt is on bad terms with the government in Saudi Arabia, each one of these governments during the seasons of Ramaḍān and Hajj will disagree with the other about when the start or end of the month is. When these opportunistic regimes disagree about such things, they draw the Muslim populace into their ego-politics. Muslims have no choice but to think seriously about overturning these absconding governments, especially as they have demonstrated an incapability and an unwillingness to declare the beginning of a lunar month that is not in contradiction with *shar'ī* or scientific facts.

When the day comes in which Muslims will have their modern observatories situated on mountain tops, above the level of cloud and light pollution, with their altitude being particularly satisfactory for detecting the crescent; when Muslim astronomers working at large observatories welcome inquiries from the general Muslim public, and when many of these observatories open their doors for self-guided tours; when local astronomical societies own observatories where it is possible to view the planets, stars, and galaxies on clear nights; when all this becomes available and accessible to ordinary Muslims, then we shall rejoice because our resources and our talents will finally be where they should be: in the service of Allah (ﷻ).

Compare where we should be with what we have today. Today, if anyone asks for the identities of those who sighted the crescent in Saudi Arabia, there is no answer. This is also the case with the overwhelming majority of regimes in the Muslim world; they will not tell us who saw the crescent lest some bright and sincere Muslims ask how a crescent can be sighted when it is still obscured by the Earth.

Jihad is the Vehicle That Carries the Islamic *Da'wah*

The next lesson of this section of the noble Qur'an is about *qitāl* (fighting and war) in general, and about fighting in the vicinity of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (the Holy Sanctuary in Makkah), especially during the sacred months (*al-ashhur al-ḥurum*). This is followed by a call for money to be disbursed for Allah's (ﷻ) cause, which is part and parcel of a committed Muslim's jihad.

And fight [as you are] on the way to Allah those who are fighting you and be not antagonistic; verily, Allah does not like antagonists. And kill them where you reach them, and expel them from where they expelled you; for *fitnah* is even worse than killing. And fight not against them near the Sacred Sanctuary unless they fight against you there first. If they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of the deniers [of Allah's power].

But if they desist, behold, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. And fight against them until there is no more *fitnah* and the *dīn* is Allah's. But if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who are offensive.

Fight during the sacred months if you are attacked, for a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] just retribution. Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you, but remain conscious of Allah [and His power], and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him.

And spend [freely] in Allah's cause, and let not your own hands throw you into destruction; and persevere in doing good, behold, Allah loves the doers of good (2:190–195).

Some narratives hold these *āyāt* to be the first to address the issue of combat. Before this, though, permission was granted to Muslims to fight the *kāfirs* who inflicted injustice and oppression

upon them. Committed Muslims felt that this permission would be the first signal for them to prepare to fight and carry the jihad into its combative level. They felt that they had to be prepared in case they were attacked; they could no longer be at the mercy of their enemies. The Muslims' entrenchment and fortified status were mentioned in *Sūrah al-Hajj*,

Permission [to fight] is given to those who have been aggressed upon, and, verily, Allah has indeed the power to support them — those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no reason but their saying, “Our Sustainer is Allah!”

For, if Allah had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques — in [all of] which Allah's name is abundantly extolled — would surely have been destroyed [by now].

And Allah will most certainly support him who supports His cause, for, verily, Allah is most powerful, almighty, [well aware of] those who, [even] if We entrench them on earth, remain observant of Us in their *ṣalāh* and in their distribution of wealth. They enforce *al-ma'rūf* [the common good] and they stem the *munkar* [the common wrong], but with Allah rests the outcome of all events (22:39–41)

The green light to fight was given to the committed Muslims when they experienced oppression. They were permitted to check this oppression and terminate it. For a time, when they were in Makkah, they were restrained from combatting oppressors. At that time in their social and psychological development, as they were still in the process of winning over adherents and supporters, they were told, “Hold back your hands [from combat], and remain constructive of the *ṣalāh* [relationship with Me], and circulate the *zakāh*” (4:77). Thus, this curtailment by Allah (ﷻ) of the natural response to “fight back” appears to have been calculated to

give Muslims more time to cement their internal relations, to enhance their understanding of each other, and to strengthen their shared brotherhood before they exposed themselves to all-out attack from enemies in and around Makkah.

The first reason for this restraint was to build a sense of discipline and endurance in the Arabian psychology that had just come into Islam. These bedouins were not familiar with subordination to a leadership, receiving orders, or anticipating calculated moves. These pre-Islamic Arabians in their *jāhiliyah* were emotional, excitable, and unstable. Any event could trigger a set of reactions. They were not familiar with the power to withstand prolonged hardship or stress. These nomads had to be prepared to become an *ummaḥ*, with all the responsibilities and ambitions that come with being this *ummaḥ*. They had to learn how to respond to a leadership that thinks, calculates, and makes obedience to Allah (ﷻ) its priority: the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ). This obedience and discipline did not come easily, for these pre-Islamic Arabians were impulsive people. This preparation and cultivation molded the future characters of Ḥamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, among others, who were able to withstand all the pressure and stress that came their way in Makkah. During this Makkan tenure these future leaders of Islam built their characters under the leadership of Muhammad (ﷺ). The urge to fight was balanced with the judgment of restraint, the zeal for direct and immediate action with the calculation for building, pursuing, maintaining, and pacing a longer-term strategy. These individuals were being prepared for a greater task ahead.

Another reason for this restraint in Makkah appears to be the fact that the Arabian environment was one of chivalry and social courtesy. When Muslims in that type of social climate were enduring intimidation and all sorts of pressures, as many of them were unable to retaliate effectively, they were indirectly tugging at the social norms of social sympathy for their “underdog” position. This was best expressed when Quraysh agreed to excommunicate and sanction Banū Hāshim to a place called Shi‘ab Abū Ṭālib. This was

done by Quraysh to try to break up the support system of individuals who had come to the aid of the Prophet (ﷺ). When this Qurayshī social pressure increased throughout long months of censure and exclusion, the traditions of chivalry and social welfare in the ambiance of Makkah moved to the Prophet's (ﷺ) side. Several notables in Makkah went together to the Ka'bah to tear up the sanctions document that was posted there. The siege of the Muslims was ended because the social pressure that was generated by the Prophet's (ﷺ) leadership led to the positive traits of Makkan society eroding the negative policies of Quraysh. This was a power calculation by Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ), but it required the obedience and the discipline of all those who were with him to carry the day.

Restraint from military action at that time in Makkah also avoided an internecine bloodbath. Muslims at that time were members of many Makkan households. Many families were trying to put pressure on these Muslims to return to their *jāhili* ways. Makkah did not have a central authority that coordinated this harassment and persecution. In the absence of a central authority that Muslims could coordinate their military thrust against, they were left with the option of warring with their own families. Each family would have had to shed its own blood. At that stage, in the Arabian society of Makkah, the *mushriks* could have made Islam look like it was out to break up families, destroy homes, and poison personal and tribal relations. After the Hijrah, though, Muslims became an independent unit that was at odds with the dominating powers of Makkah who were facing this independent Islamic community with armies and military campaigns. So, when Muslims were authorized to bear arms and fight after the Hijrah, they were no longer the individuals and family members they had been in Makkah; in Madinah they were a single bloc, united and distinct in every way from the *jāhili* community that was attacking them.

Another consideration for military restraint in Makkah was the balance of power. The Muslims in Makkah were numerically weak: Muslims were in the scores while the *mushriks* were in the thousands. It was Allah's (ﷻ) care and steering that took the Muslims out of Makkah, gave them a base in Madinah, expanded

their alliances, increased their numbers, and provided them with a base from which to operate.

The regulations of warfare were implemented on a gradual scale that corresponded with the increase in scope of the Islamic movement in the Arabian peninsula and beyond. These *āyāt* allude to the initial friction between the two major camps in the Arabian peninsula at that time: the Islamic camp and that of the *mushriks*. The *āyāt* outline general rules of engagement. The principles set down here have not been substantially altered, although slight modifications have been introduced in *Sūrah al-Barā'ah (al-Tawbah)*.

This may also be the place for a word about jihad in Islam. It will also serve to clarify the concept of combat as presented in *āyāt* here and elsewhere in the Qur'an. This revelation is the final and irrevocable instruction to mankind from Allah (ﷻ). It is intended to be the foundation of Allah's (ﷻ) system and kingdom on earth. All humans are addressed by this concluding Scripture. It has become the duty of the Islamic Ummah to lead mankind in the implementation of this divine document. The Muslim Ummah has to have enough ambition to know that the only hope left for a humanity embroiled in a myriad of problems is in this leading role: the realignment of humanity's direction from one leading to catastrophic materialism, selfishness, and satanism to a direction that leads to Allah (ﷻ). This can only be done by adopting this holy Text. This is the privilege of being the Islamic Ummah. Humanity does not know it yet, but its only salvation in either world is through the Qur'an. Humanity's failure is expressed by its alienation from the Qur'an; the Muslims' failure is expressed by their defection from the Qur'an. Man's inhumanity to man, economic disasters, the horrors of modern war, plague and pestilence, technological disasters, drought and famine, and other crises and catastrophes are indications of the absence of the Qur'an from men's hearts, households, and homelands.

Because the Qur'an is the only possible rescuer of humanity, it is humanity's right to have unimpeded access to the Qur'an, its meanings and its potential. That means that no government, no authority, no state, no army and no force whatsoever can be

allowed to obstruct access to the meanings and purposes of this holy Scripture.

It is humanity's duty also to leave individuals and peoples free to interact with the contents and the objectives of this divine declaration. If a people decide after being exposed to the Qur'an that it is not for them and they do not want to accept it, that is their choice and prerogative; but that does not entitle them to block the flow of this message to other peoples who also have the right to hear the full meanings of Allah's (ﷻ) final words to humanity. People have the god-given freedom to decline the message of the Qur'an and the Muslims themselves should guarantee such freedom. But the Muslims are equally responsible for guaranteeing the spread of this Qur'anic message to all peoples, without exception, without discrimination, and without favoritism.

Then, if there are people who are convinced and adhere to the Qur'an, it is their god-given right to bond to it without any interference or attempt to lure them away from their heartfelt conviction. They have the right to be free of any distraction from this bond with Allah (ﷻ). No power on earth has any right to engineer social conditions or to spread intentional misinformation that obscures what Islam is about or distorts the meanings of the Qur'an. It is the responsibility and duty of the Islamic authority and government to protect Muslims from sedition, sabotage, subversion, and other types of *fitnah*. The Islamic authority has to guarantee freedom of conscience. It has to offer security to those who have found what they are looking for: the Qur'an. This freedom of conscience and communication; freedom of expression and intelligence; and freedom of persuasion and popular opinion is guaranteed by the Qur'an and the champions of the Qur'an, in theory and in practice.

With this understanding, an Islamic government is duty bound to break down all barriers of communication as well as international boundaries and conventional bounds that impede the free flow of information about Islam (*tabligh and da'wah*). The earth's population has to be free when it listens to Allah (ﷻ). And the responsibility for guaranteeing such universal freedom falls on the

shoulders of the committed Muslims in an Islamic government.

People, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have to realize that human governments are capable of managing, modifying, and manipulating social conditions and public opinion in such a way that God Himself and what He has to say become controversial, elementary, or just “outdated.” This real-life scenario, which is demonstrable in the world today, has to be addressed by Muslims in positions of power. These Muslims entrusted with power must realize that the “Hollywood” grip on the public mind has to be broken. The media-induced trance has to be lifted. These worldly powers make it their job to go after Muslims everywhere; this struggle has to be the central concern of Muslims in authority, lest Islam itself succumb to the forces of the status quo and the power-mongers who see in Islam an enemy that must be defeated.

When the level of contention is raised in the Muslim collective mind to one between the authority of Islam on one side and the power-perverts (the US government, the Russian government, the French government, the British government, etc.) on the other side, the Muslims will realize that the Qur’an and Islam are not interested in forcing anyone to convert or to abandon their heartfelt convictions. Rather Islam and the Qur’an are clear that all power ramparts that stand in the way of communicating the Qur’anic content across national, racial, cultural, and formal barriers should be removed, if necessary by the use of force. When this is done the *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ) will prosper on His earth. To this end Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* admits no United Nations shackles and no “super-power” that will veto its access to the peoples of the world. When these “customary” restrictions are eliminated by the Muslims’ use of force (when the circumstances dictate it), no one will be afraid to become a Muslim fearing he will be ostracized, stigmatized, or indentured. The powers that were capable of ostracizing, stigmatizing, and indenturing will no longer be around because they will have been neutralized by the Muslim power initiative.

The aims of jihad should be understood within this framework. The principles of jihad that may eventually lead to military action were meant also to tackle these types of circumstances that

have become the products of governments that cannot see any possibility of reconciling Islam and freedom of political, civil, and ideological expression.

Jihad was prescribed to fortify and shield the collective Muslim mind and conscience from danger, injury, and destruction. When Muslims identify and define jihad within this power-based understanding, they will be surprised to realize that their private lives and their public behavior, both of which are essential to their life within the framework of Shari'ah, are no longer vulnerable to bullies and intimidators. When jihad is raised to such a level, it gives Muslims the confidence they need, and at the same time it strikes terror into the hearts of the *kāfirs*, which is what they deserve. Jihad is meant to take on all the earthly power-structures that distract from a normal and natural attention by men to what Allah (ﷻ) says.

This is jihad as it ought to be understood from all its Qur'anic references. This is a jihad that brings eventual triumph through the sacrifices of *shahīds* (martyrs) and the selflessness of loyal and spirited Muslims.

These *āyāt* were a source of instruction to the core Muslims in Madinah who were locked in a power struggle with the *mushriks* of Quraysh, and many of whom were expelled from Makkah by force. Belonging to Islam and belonging to the prevalent power structure in Makkah became mutually exclusive. These *āyāt* layout the principles of jihad in the context of those times, but they are equally applicable to our own times.

These *āyāt* begin by telling the Muslims to fight those who were and who still are fighting them. They tell the Muslims to wage war against those who are at war with them wherever and whenever. But this Islamic war should be fought without aggression or unprovoked and unnecessary violence, **“And fight on Allah’s course against those who are fighting you; and do not aggress, for Allah does not favor aggressors” (2:190).**

This *āyah* defines in plain terms how Muslims should engage the enemy in battle. It is apparent from the words of the *āyah* that Muslims must take on those opponents who consider themselves

to be in a state of war with the Muslims. When Muslims go to war they do so for Allah's (ﷻ) sake. Unlike all other societies throughout all history, when people fought for the sake of religious bigotry (such as the European Christian Crusades of a thousand years ago); or when they fought for nationalistic, tribal, or racial reasons (17th to 19th-century Europe, and 20th-century fascism); or when they fought for imperial aggrandizement and economic exploitation (including the West's contemporary "national interest" wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Chechnya); or when they fought wars of aggression resulting in enslavement (apartheid and Zionism) and political and economic dependence (colonialism and neo-colonialism); the Islamic purpose of jihad is to break down all barriers that interfere with the direct communication of Allah's (ﷻ) purpose and the Qur'an's meanings to all societies. No Muslim should need a permit to broadcast the Qur'an and its meanings anywhere. No Muslim should have to submit to censures for printing, publishing, or writing the meanings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. No Muslim should ever be required to please any government by withholding or restricting the meanings of the Qur'an and Sunnah from any gathering or forum. No Muslim should ever be required to obtain a visa to go to any particular land in the world for the purpose of explaining, outlining, and communicating the meanings of Allah's (ﷻ) words and the Prophet's (ﷺ) actions. This transnational, transcultural, and translegal right belongs to the committed Muslims who, in humility of self and pride of Islam feel the responsibility to connect the unknowing around the world to Allah's (ﷻ) Word. But obviously, in today's world there are obstacles and real barriers between those who understand the Qur'an and want to communicate its meanings, on one side, and those who are ignorant of the Qur'an and are in need of its meanings, on the other.

The currently dominant materialistic world has reserved the right to a free flow of information and travel to the capitalists and the power classes of the world. It is the words and claims of the moneyed and powerful that have free access to far and near. This whole scenario has to be changed. Allah's (ﷻ) servants and sub-

jects must lead this change. But this change — contrary to our best hopes and wishes — can never be a “peaceful” one. The triangular relationship between power, wealth, and legitimacy in the modern, Westoxic world is so entrenched and fortified that the only force left for mankind to break out of this triangle is the force of jihad.

Any experienced human being knows that the judges of the land are in more than one way the captives of the power structure elites — politicians, decision makers, and people of “status.” These influential politicians and decision makers are indebted to the businesses, capitalists, and financiers who lubricate the formers’ political rise to power. The courts, the constitutions, and the capitalists will not permit Allah’s (ﷻ) words to move the people of the world to rectify the course of human history and ensure that justice is the order of the day. The triumvirate of court, constitution, and capital will lock hands and merge minds to abort any Islamic attempt to bring down the mental and military barriers through jihad, thereby setting the world straight with equality and justice. That is what it means to have Allah’s (ﷻ) Word supreme. Muslims are not involved, nor should they be, in wars that are for some national interest or to secure markets for commodities and industries, **“And do not aggress; for Allah does not favor aggressors.”**

In times of armed conflict aggression may take the form of victimizing those who have no malice or have done no wrong to the Muslims. Peaceful civilians should never be equated with hostile belligerents. These peaceful civilians include women, children, the elderly, the clergy of any religion or faith, as well as all those sectors of society who are the victims of their own establishment: the orphans, the needy, the oppressed, the minorities, and so on. There are rules of engagement when Muslims go to war, and no Muslim commander or officer has the right to violate the Islamic standards of warfare. The atrocities that have so often been committed by military powers, historically and nowadays, against innocent people have no place in the conduct of warfare according to the standards of Islam.

Although Muslims hesitate to say so, the fact is that Muslims are generally emotionally and humanely superior to their adversaries. The element of *taqwá*, because a Muslim fears the pun-

ishment and power of Allah (ﷻ), acts as the strongest deterrent against the wickedness that often accompanies warfare. Still fresh in our memories is the mass rape of Muslim women in Bosnia by “Christian” Serbs. And these “Christian” Serbs called these rapes of about 60,000 (according to one count) Muslim women “an act of war.” Also fresh in our minds is the US invasion of Iraq in which a million Iraqi civilians were murdered, four million were displaced, two million orphans were created, and one million Iraqi women were turned into prostitutes. All of this was characterized as “collateral damage” by the US Department of Defense.¹⁸³

The Islamic references for conduct during war are the Qur’an and the Sunnah, but how do they compare to the references of Western civilization, or more precisely, the Judeo-Christian references? Beside this immediate lesson in the Qur’an, there are others in the coming *sūrah*s on how Muslims should prosecute their wars and the higher standards they are held to. But before moving on, consider a few hadiths that will help to deliver a feel for Islamic military conduct in times of war. Ibn ‘Umar narrates that,

*...a woman was found dead in the aftermath of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) military campaigns and so the Prophet (ﷺ) gave orders not to kill women and children.*¹⁸⁴

The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) declared, “While in combat avoid [targeting] the face.”¹⁸⁵ Ibn Mas‘ūd relays the following from the Prophet (ﷺ), “The people most indisposed to killing are the people of *īmān*.”¹⁸⁶ ‘Abdullāh ibn Yazīd al-Anṣārī relates that, “...the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade pillage and mutilation.”¹⁸⁷ Abū Ya‘lá said,

We went on a military expedition with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālid ibn al-Walīd...He then exhibited four enemies and ordered that they be executed by a method called ṣabran [slow execution by using the dull side of the sword]. This was relayed to Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, who said, “I heard the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) banish that type of execution. By He who is in control of my soul, if it were a hen I would not have

*killed it in such a manner.” When ‘Abd al-Raḥmān heard that comment, he freed four slaves.*¹⁸⁸

When the Prophet (ﷺ) appointed military commanders he would advise them repeatedly to demonstrate the fact of their *taqwá*, that is, their faith that Allah’s (ﷻ) power is above theirs, in their private and public actions. He would say to them,

*Commence your military engagement in the name of Allah and on His [outlined] course of action [fi sabilillāh]. Fight against those who are opposed and antagonistic to Allah. Commence military operations but do not act treacherously, do not mangle or butcher, and do not kill young children.”*¹⁸⁹

Mālik reports that Abū Bakr said to his troops,

You will find people who say that they have devoted themselves to God [monks, priests, clerics and scholars]. Leave them to what they have devoted themselves to. Do not kill women, children or elderly people.¹⁹⁰

It is not easy to maintain this type of order in the face of temptation for revenge and retaliation in a climate of hostility. But this was exactly the behavior of the Muslim military and its groundbreaking military conduct. That is because an Islamic military force should be the Qur’an in flesh and in blood, **“And fight on a course to Allah those who launch aggression against you, but do not initiate hostilities [because] Allah does not favor those who initiate hostilities.”**

Muslims knew very well that they would never achieve military victory because of their numbers: they were almost always outnumbered. They were also keenly aware of the fact that they would never triumph in a war because of any superior military technology because they were almost always technologically “inferior.” Their enemies had the material and physical balance tipped to their advantage. The Muslims knew, however, that they had Allah (ﷻ)

on their side because they minded Him, they obeyed Him, and they honored Him. They knew that if they were to relinquish this unique relationship with Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) they would be doomed. That is why these vulnerable Muslims obeyed and followed Allah's (ﷻ) instructions all the way to the battlefield, even though their enemies tempted them through the human feeling of revenge by mutilating Muslims in unheard-of ways.

But if the Muslims do not commit war crimes in retaliation for war crimes committed against them, that does not mean that the Muslims in arms are going to end the war because of savage and cold-blooded behavior by their enemies. On the contrary, the instructions from on high tell the Muslims to pursue the war with these foes whose agenda is to displace Muslims from their homelands, render them refugees, and massacre them on their own turf. Allah (ﷻ) instructs combatant Muslims to wage war against such enemies anywhere and everywhere they are found, with the exception of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. But this exception is revoked if these enemies launch hostilities at the site of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; in this case Muslims are instructed to fight them even there. The other development that will stop the Muslims' war is that these *kāfir* antagonists accept and acknowledge the authority and *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ), even if the destruction and mayhem they had inflicted on Muslims is unconscionable,

And kill them, wherever you may catch up with them, and expel them from where they have expelled you, for *fitnah* is more menacing than murder. And do not clash with them at al-Masjid al-Ḥarām unless they wage war against you there; if they battle against you, you battle against them: thus is the earnings of the *kāfirs*. But if they desist, then Allah is forgiving and compassionate (2:191).

The *fitnah* in the above *āyah*, which is more menacing than murder, is the assault on the most precious possession in life: freedom for all people to choose Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*. When this freedom

is denied the value of life is diminished and its quality declines. This freedom can be taken away from people through a legally binding command or decision, such as is done in countries where dictatorships and authoritarians dominate. Or this freedom can be taken away from people by undermining the idea and principles that resonate with the meanings of the Qur'an. This is what is happening in the "free world," where a combination of factors make the concept of a relationship with God meaningless. The nature of Western society is a *fitnah* because if anyone tries to fit God into the Western established order, he runs the risk of being crushed by the established order or being effectively marginalized to the extent that he appears backward or worse.

Euro-American societies have invested two millennia in a frantic and tortured evasion of scripture, so that any system or dispensation that relates to God is the last thing that would find any official or "mainstream" support. *Kufr* is very attractive in Western society; commitment to God is offensive. What can one say about a society that, in its avidity to demonstrate its secular credentials at home and in its hostility to Islamic determination anywhere, proscribes hanging the Ten Commandments in classrooms and courtrooms? Is this not a *fitnah*? Is it not a *fitnah* to project adultery as not only acceptable but fashionable, given such positive euphemisms as "an affair," "sexual indiscretion," or an "amour?" Drugs, addiction, homosexuality, and abortion are *fitnahs* because each kills in its own way. When divine values are out and satanic habits are in, then *fitnah* is on hand. The worst part of this institutionalized and constitutionalized *fitnah* is that there are hundreds of millions of its victims who cannot see the whole picture and who, in the absence of the Qur'anic message, think they are modern, civilized and cultured when in fact they are sliding into the abyss of a moral meltdown, a social suicide, and a civilizational catastrophe.

That is why it is imperative to have a universal standard of freedom that guarantees a free flow of information about Allah (ﷻ), the Qur'an, the Prophet (ﷺ), and Islam. The purpose of our existence on earth is to have a working relationship with Allah (ﷻ), a relationship that is intimate and yet practical. Every effort

is honored by Allah (ﷻ) as long as it is devoted to Allah (ﷻ). One of the most honorable acts is to embrace Him with heart, soul, and mind in an air of freedom and free will; and in an environment where the power to think, speak, and act is not compromised by the impositions of corrupt governments and bureaucracies. The absence of this freedom, now prevalent around the world, is the major *fitnah* that can only be addressed by a call to arms.

The nonexistence of this freedom renders us the living dead. There are people who have thought out this whole process. There are minds behind a lifestyle that makes one think that one is free when really one has lost the most precious freedom there is: the freedom to adhere and conform to Allah (ﷻ). That is why, when the Muslims evolve and reach the stage of a power bloc, they are instructed by Allah (ﷻ) not only to wage war against these enemies of humanity but to *kill* them, not for pleasure or for vengeance, but as a necessity for the greater benefit of society. This is why the mode of jihad must be the standard of Islamic military behavior: do not mutilate, do not incinerate, and do not take personal revenge.

Nevertheless, there is one place on earth where no fighting should occur, and that is al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makkah. Allah (ﷻ) has designated this one area as a safe and secure zone. Its surrounding areas should also be safe and secure, in Allah's (ﷻ) fulfillment of the *du'ā*' of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). Furthermore, this area should be a refuge, a haven, and an asylum for people who feel threatened, intimidated or imperilled. The only ones to be fought there are the diehard *kāfirs* who do not acknowledge the sanctity of this refuge. That is why, if these *kāfirs* aggress against Muslims even at this holiest of places, then Allah (ﷻ) permits the Muslims to fight them there. Once the Muslims begin this fight they should not cease until Allah's (ﷻ) enemies are eliminated.

“But if they desist, then Allah is forgiving and compassionate.” This means that if the aggressors desist and abandon their *kufr*, Allah (ﷻ) may welcome them into His amnesty and care with forgiveness and pardon. The important caveat here is that a temporary cessation of hostilities and agreeing not to spread the

fitnah do not qualify these *kāfirs* for amnesty from the Muslims; they must agree to *quit* their *kufir* completely, otherwise the Muslims will only agree to a ceasefire.

This Islam is truly magnificent and superior! Imagine all the bloodshed these *kāfirs* have caused over the centuries, yet if they forsake their *kufir*, and enter into the *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ), they will be granted forgiveness, even though they may have been up to their knees in blood!

The Islamic military effort has been fabricated and forged to eliminate the factors that cause human beings to discount or push aside Allah's (ﷻ) choice for a dignified human life, that is, Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*. There should be no social, economic, or other pressures that exclude any human being from choosing Allah's (ﷻ) solution to human problems. Likewise, there should be no power on earth that lures or buys humans to choose anything besides Allah (ﷻ) as Superior and Savior. This type of world with these types of free choices can only be a reality when Muslims themselves obtain power. By these *āyāt*, Muslims are taught and coached to obtain power, use power, and pursue power with no apologies or excuses. The harsh world outside is telling the powerless Muslims of today from Central Asia to Southern Africa that there is no alternative to the use of force, provided they use it as Allah (ﷻ) advises them to,

And battle with them until there is no longer *fitnah* and the *dīn* becomes Allah's. And if they refrain, then there shall be no disposition to fight except against the offenders (2:193).

These words were first revealed to address the way Muslims should respond to the hostile *mushriks* in the Arabian peninsula. The Arabian *mushriks* had the power and influence to make people think and act against Islam when Islam was not yet in practice. Even when Islam gained a power base in Madinah, the *mushriks* still sought to turn people away from choosing Islam of their own free will and conviction. But this *āyah* and its attendant teachings are

not meant to be confined to the Arabian peninsula. This Qur'an is a living document, so jihad proceeds until the Last Day.

There are still power elites in the world who are engineering social conditions and developing mental images that enslave man's will and arrest his higher judgment. These subtle elites have developed techniques to block minds and consciences from choosing Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*. Muslims should know better than anyone else that these elites are so well entrenched that only a worldwide Islamic state and administration can realistically hope to liberate people, not with a sense of false freedom but with the full freedom that enables them to face Allah (ﷻ) and say, "We accept You and conform to You," or "We do not."

No wanton attack on innocent people, reactionary violence, or anarchic insurrection is the answer. Any premature effort to rid the world of these elites is counterproductive. It is unwise to commit random acts of violence in the absence of a groundswell of public opinion that has identified these elites as the evil they are and the evil they represent. It is also illogical for hit-and-run armed groups to try to defeat the military capabilities of these elites. They own the US military, NATO, the intelligence services, the CIA, the Supreme Court, and many of the lower courts. They control, either directly or indirectly, most of the state, county, and local law enforcement agencies. To ignore this fact is folly.

In today's world (1430AH and 2009CE) there is a coordinated war against Islamic self-determination. This is not a random affair. Fighter aircraft do not just happen to drop bombs on Muslims in Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia; they need pilots who receive orders from politicians who, in turn, are groomed by the "system" to reach high offices where decisions are made to annihilate all Muslims seeking self-determination, wherever they may be. The establishment, from the highest office in the land, the presidency, to the low-ranking executioner, are the arms of the shadowy elites. The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Islamic movement all over the world are vilified by officialdom. All this is not haphazard, nor is it thoughtless. These elites include such capitalist dynasties as the Bilderbergs; state and governmental

institutions such as the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the Trilateral Commission; and such shadowy cabals as the Skull and Bones Society and the Committee of 300.¹⁹¹

Entertain no doubt about it; these elites have to be fought. But the fighting force that is required is an Islamic fighting force that proceeds from the worldwide Ummah. The more the Islamic peoples are subjected to wars, conspiracies, bombardment, dislocation and dismemberment, the more they are challenged to come to their senses and understand what Allah (ﷻ) is telling them in these *āyāt*. They have to fight back and they have to nurture a will to kill those who aggress against them. If these elites quit their trouble-making and mischief, which is highly unlikely, then they spare themselves the consequences of this Islamic jihad, **“And if they end [their *kufr* pursuits] then there shall be no military assaults [by Muslims] except against offenders.”**

Later in *Sūrah al-Barā’ah (al-Tawbah)*, instructions were given by Allah (ﷻ) to purge the whole Arabian peninsula of all *mushrik* forces. *Kufr* power bases in the Arabian peninsula were now anathema. These dictatorial elites (*mushriks*) had to leave the peninsula or declare their public affiliation with the Islamic power. This development accompanied the progress and diffusion of Islam throughout the peninsula. The Islamic front, at a time of war with Persia and the Byzantines, could not tolerate physical and material opposition from within the Arabian peninsula.

This assault against offenders in times of war by committed Muslims is the equivalent of defending the oppressed, guaranteeing their true freedom, and securing justice in society. Then the *āyāt* go on to describe the significance of fighting during the months of security (*al-ashhur al-ḥurum*),

A sacred month for a sacred month [of fighting]: for a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] just retribution. Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you, but remain conscious of Allah [and His power over you], and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him (2:194).

So whoever violates the sanctity of the holy months by acts of war cannot expect to be exempt from counter acts of war. In Islam there are two sources of security and sanctity: al-Masjid al-Ḥarām (a place) and the sacred months (a period of time). Everything in these two spheres of time and place is off-limits: lives, wealth and sanctities. Nothing and no one should be harmed in these spheres of serenity. But whoever breaks this code of security shall be the first to suffer from lack of security. But the Islamic retribution for such acts of hostility is performed within the Islamic norms and according to Islamic moral principles, **“Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you.”** Muslims are instructed to observe a proportional response to the initial aggression against them at their holy sites and times. This they should do as a matter of their own *taqwá*. They know that without this *taqwá* they are at a loss, so the power presence of Allah (ﷻ) is ever-present in their mind and morale.

This all-out mobilization of Muslims for jihad, in addition to manpower, is in need of a budget. True, at the onset of this military mobilization there were Muslim volunteers for the war effort who would secure their own weapons, means of transportation, and provisions. Strictly speaking, at that time there were no salaries for the soldiers and senior commanders of Islam. It was all done, more or less, on a voluntary basis. This is how moving and how powerful this Islamic momentum was. People were coming forth with their own expenses to cover the war budget. But there were also many poor people who were motivated to go to the war front and felt very committed to the war effort, but they could not find the resources to cover their needs. They would approach the Prophet (ﷺ) and ask him to help them defray these expenses when the journey to the war front was long. Sometimes the Prophet (ﷺ) could not help them,

Nor [is there blame] on those who came to you [O Prophet, with the request] that you provide them with mounts, and when you said “I cannot find anything whereon to mount you” they turned away, their eyes

overflowing with tears out of sorrow that they had no means to spend [for jihad] (9:92).

This is one of the reasons the Qur'an and the Prophetic guidelines tell Muslims to spend for the cause of Allah (ﷻ): to equip the warriors of Islam. Usually the call for jihad was accompanied by a call for donations and contributions for the cause of Allah (ﷻ). The withholding of money from this war-effort is almost treason, **“And spend [freely] in Allah’s cause, and let not your own hands throw you into destruction; and persevere in doing good, behold, Allah loves the doers of good.”**

Withholding money from such a cause is a form of self-destruction through a lack of generosity; it is also an act of social destruction through incompetence and disability. This is especially so in an Islamic order that is rooted in a spirit of military volunteerism. The *āyāt* form a parallel between the high points of jihad and spending *fi sabilillāh*, on one hand, and the perfection of human deeds, on the other, **“and persevere in perfecting your good deeds; for Allah loves those who [try to] perfect their good deeds.”** This is one of the highest ranks in a man’s relationship with Allah (ﷻ). This *iḥsān* is defined by Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ), “[*Iḥsān is*] to adopt and conform to Allah as though you see Him; for though you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.”¹⁹²

Hajj: A Symbol of the Universal Human Brotherhood

And consummate the Hajj and the ‘Umrah in the honor of Allah, and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford. And do not shave your heads until the offering has been sacrificed, but he from among you who is ill or suffers from a head injury shall redeem himself by fasting, or *ṣadaqaḥ*, or [any other] act of devotion. And if you are hale and secure, then he who takes advantage of ‘Umrah before the [time of] Hajj shall give whatever offering he can

easily afford, whereas he who cannot afford it shall fast for three days during the Hajj and for seven days after your return, that is, ten full [days]. All this relates to him who does not live near the Inviolable Masjid. And remain conscious of Allah [and His power presence], and know that Allah is severe in retribution.

The Hajj is [a matter of] well-appointed months. And whoever undertakes the Hajj in those [months] shall, during the Hajj, abstain from lustful speech, from deviant behavior, and from quarreling; and whatever good you may do, Allah is aware of it. And make provision for yourselves, but, verily, the best of all provisions is an awareness of Allah[and His power]; remain, then, conscious of Me, O you who are of core knowledge.

[However] you will be committing no sin if [during the Hajj] you seek to obtain any bounty from your Sustainer. And when you surge downward in multitudes from ‘Arafāt, remember Allah at the Sentimental Sanctity (al-Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām), and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way; and surge onward together with the multitude of all the other people who surge onward, and ask Allah to forgive you your sins, for, verily, Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

And when you have performed your acts of worship, [continue to] bear Allah in mind as you would bear your own fathers in mind, nay, with a yet keener remembrance! For there are people who [merely] pray, “O our Sustainer! Give us in this world,” and such shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come.

But there are among them such as pray, “O our Sustainer! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire:” it is these that shall have their portion [of happiness] in return for what they have earned. And Allah is swift in reckoning.

And bear Allah in mind during the appointed days, but he who hurries away within two days shall incur no sin, and he who tarries longer shall incur no sin, provided that he is conscious of Allah. Hence remain conscious of Allah, and know that unto Him you shall be gathered (2:196–203).

What follows in this sequence of linking human activity to the cycles of the moon, after Ramaḍān, and fighting during the sacred months, is a discussion of the major and the minor pilgrimages (the Hajj and the ‘Umraḥ). This lesson lays out the purposes of Hajj. It will surprise some to realize that the Hajj today is not what it was in the days of Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ). In fact, the Hajj in our time is as dead as it was in the time preceding the Prophet (ﷺ), in the darkest nights of *jāhiliyah*. The pre-Islamic Arabians of the time of Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab had reduced the Hajj to fit into their pro-establishment culture; similarly, the Saudi royals have traditionalized and customized the Hajj to fit into their pro-American and pro-Israeli allegiance. At the time these *āyāt* were revealed, Hajj was a status quo activity, traceable in the public mind of the Arabians all the way back to Ismā‘īl and Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). These *āyāt* along with the others about the Hajj and ‘Umraḥ, overhauled this “dead” ritual, purging it of all *kufir* and *shirk* overtones. The Hajj of these *āyāt* was to assume a meaningful and practical role in the growing Islamic social order.

The first performance of the Qur’anic Hajj was in 9AH under the supervision of Abū Bakr. The following year, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself performed the Hajj. During this Hajj, Abū Bakr and Imam ‘Alī, on instructions from Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) announced, “After this year there shall be no *mushrik* doing *ṭawāf* [circumambulation] around the Ka‘bah.”¹⁹³ With this consolidated Islamic power position the *āyah* was disclosed, “**...mushriks are nothing but ritually unfit; and so they shall not approach the Sacred Masjid from this year onwards**” (9:28).

It would be helpful to know when *āyāt* 2:196–203 were revealed in the context of the establishment of Islamic political

reality in Arabia. There is a historical narrative that says the *āyah*, **“And if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford,”** was revealed during the sixth year of the Hijrah. However, there is no consensus among the Islamic historians about when exactly the Hajj became an Islamic obligation. Some Islamic scholars suggest that the Hajj was mandated by the *āyah*, **“And consummate the Hajj and the ‘Umrah in the honor of Allah,”** (2:196) while others attribute it to the *āyah*, **“And people owe Allah the pilgrimage to the [Sacred] Sanctuary — those who are capable of it”** (3:97).

When precisely these *āyāt* were revealed is unclear, however. Some scholars, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, argue that Hajj became mandatory during the ninth or tenth year of the Hijrah, perhaps based on the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) himself conducted his Hajj during the tenth year of the Hijrah, presumably soon after it had become an obligation.¹⁹⁴ This, though, is not a solid basis of decision. There may have been some interferences, intrusions, and impositions that caused the Prophet (ﷺ) to delay his Hajj until the tenth year; he sent Abū Bakr as head of the Hajj delegation during the ninth year. It has also been reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) intended to go to Hajj after returning from the military campaign of Tabūk, but deferred it because he realized that the *mushriks* were still going to the Hajj and going around the Ka‘bah undressed. It was after this that *Sūrah al-Barā‘ah* was revealed and the Prophet (ﷺ) sent ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to recite its opening *āyāt* to the people. These *āyāt* spelled out the Muslims’ relationship with others: any agreement with the *mushriks* must be terminated, and the peoples’ assembly at Miná is the place of *nahr* (sacrifice). ‘Alī’s public statement declared that paradise would be not accessible to a *kāfir*, that no *mushrik* would henceforth be permitted to the Hajj, no unclothed person would be able to circle the Ka‘bah, and that whoever entered into a pact with Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) shall have it honored until it expires. Thus Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) did not go to the Ka‘bah for Hajj until it was free of the *mushriks*.

There is some reason to believe that the obligation of Hajj was communicated to the Muslims before the last year or two in

Madinah. There are also indications that it may have taken place in Makkah before the Hijrah, although this is a minority view. This view is based on *āyāt* in *Sūrah al-Hajj*, a Makkan *sūrah*, detailing the rites and rituals of the Hajj that Allah (ﷻ) revealed to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ).¹⁹⁵ These *āyāt* include,

For, when We assigned unto Ibrāhīm the site of this Temple, [We said to him], “Do not ascribe divinity to any beside Me!” and, “Purify My Temple for those who will walk around it, and those who will stand before it [in meditation], and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves [in prayer].”

Hence, [O Muhammad], proclaim you unto all people the [duty of] Hajj. They will come to you on foot and on every [kind of] fast mount, coming from every far-away point [on earth], so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of Allah on the days appointed [for sacrifice], over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them [to this end]; eat, then, thereof, and feed the unfortunate poor.

Thereafter let them bring to an end their state of self-denial, and let them fulfill the vows which they [may] have made, and let them walk [once again] around the Most Ancient Temple.

All this [is ordained by Allah]; and if one honors Allah’s sacred commandments, it will redound to his own good in his Sustainer’s sight... (22:26–30).

This is [to be borne in mind]. And anyone who honors the symbols set up by Allah [shall know that], verily, these [symbols derive their value] from the God-consciousness in the [believers’] hearts (22:32).

And as for the sacrifice of cattle, We have ordained it for you as one of the symbols set up by Allah, in which

there is [much] good for you. Hence, extol the name of Allah over them when they are lined up [for sacrifice]; and after they have fallen lifeless to the ground, eat of their flesh, and feed the poor who is contented with his lot [and does not beg], as well as him who is forced to beg. It is to this end that We have made them subservient to your needs, so that you might have cause to be grateful. [But bear in mind]: never does their flesh reach Allah, and neither their blood; it is only your God-consciousness that reaches Him. It is to this end that We have made them subservient to your needs, so that you might glorify Allah for all the guidance with which He has graced you. And give you this glad tid-
ing to the doers of good (22:36–37).

Clarified in the *āyāt* above are some of the rituals of Hajj. The act of sacrificing cattle, the *ṭawāf* around the Ka‘bah, leaving the state of *ihrām* (*iḥlāl*), and the invocation of Allah’s (ﷻ) name are all basic parts of the Hajj. This address binds the Islamic Ummah to the historical legacy of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), and suggests that Hajj was obligated on the Muslims while they were still in Makkah. It was the obstacles and complications imposed by the Makkan *mushriks*, who were in physical control of the Ka‘bah, that caused the Muslims to delay their Hajj. It appears that some Muslims from Madinah did go to the Hajj in the early years after the *qiblah* was changed from al-Quds to Makkah, during the second year of the Hijrah.

Suffice it to say that the Muslims had very limited access to Makkah while it was in *mushrik* control and also the nexus of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) enemies. It was when Makkah became an Islamic domain that the Muslims streamed to it in their multitudes.

“And consummate the Hajj and the ‘Umrah in the honor of Allah...” Some scholars interpret this *āyah* as making both the Hajj and the ‘Umrah mandatory. To others, it means that once someone sets out for Makkah and Madinah for the purpose of Hajj and ‘Umrah, he should complete both. It should be noted that, in so far as performing a set of rites and rituals, the ‘Umrah is virtual-

ly the same as the Hajj; the only differences are that in the ‘Umrah there is no assembly on Mount ‘Arafāt, and that it may be performed at any time, while the Hajj is restricted to a particular time of the year. Among the scholars who say that the ‘Umrah is as compulsory as the Hajj are the Shāfi‘is and the Ḥanbalīs. As well as the *āyah* above, they cite the following one as a proof of their position,

And [hence] behold, al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah are among the symbols set up by Allah; and thus, no wrong does he who, having come to the Temple for Hajj or ‘Umrah, strides to and fro between the two (2:158).

Among hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) on this topic are,

*Whoever can afford it should initiate a Hajj and an ‘Umrah.*¹⁹⁶

*‘Umrah has been inducted into Hajj until the Day of Resurrection.*¹⁹⁷

*Indeed, the Hajj and the ‘Umrah are two obligations; you may discharge your duty by beginning with either of the two.*¹⁹⁸

On the other hand the Malikīs and Ḥanafīs, among others, say that the ‘Umrah is a Sunnah, and thus an optional ritual. They point out that in several *āyāt* making the Hajj an obligation, there is no mention of the ‘Umrah. Their citations include, “**Hence, Hajj to the [Inviolable] House is a duty owed to Allah by all people who are able to undertake it...**” (3:97) and “**Hence, [O Muhammad] proclaim you to all people the [duty of] Hajj; they will come to you on foot and on every [kind of] fast mount...**” (22:27). They also point to the well-known hadith about the five pillars of Islam, in which the Hajj is listed but the ‘Umrah is not.¹⁹⁹ There is also a hadith ascribed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in which he says, “*Hajj is a jihad and ‘Umrah is a voluntary act.*”²⁰⁰ Another hadith records the Prophet’s (ﷺ) answer to a man who asked whether the ‘Umrah is a religious obligation, “*No, but if you do the ‘Umrah it is better for you.*”²⁰¹

What is clear from the Qur'an is that the Hajj and the 'Umrah are open invitations for all Muslims to go to Makkah and Madinah; but this is unacceptable to the administrators of Makkah and Madinah today. Their worst nightmare is for the Muslim public to become aware of their duty so routinely that tens upon tens of millions of Muslims perform the pilgrimages every year, instead of the measly few million who do so nowadays.

Although the performance of Hajj and 'Umrah is binding upon Muslims, if any imminent danger or disease threatens the pilgrims, they are permitted to relieve themselves of what is left of Hajj or 'Umrah. This is called *iḥṣār* (enclosure or confinement). And because of the threat of an enemy or an epidemic, Allah (ﷻ) reveals, **“And if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford” (2:196)**. In this case, the pilgrim offers a sacrifice, leaves his *iḥrām* (ceremonial garb and status) and returns to his non-ceremonial status (*iḥlāl*). This can be done, if necessary, even by those who have just entered the environs of Makkah and who have not yet approached al-Masjid al-Ḥarām or performed any part of the Hajj or 'Umrah.

This *āyah* was revealed during the sixth year of the Hijrah, when the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions were at Ḥudaybiyah but the *mushriks* constituted a threat that made it impractical for them to reach al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. When the agreement of Ḥudaybiyah was signed between the Islamic forces and the *mushriks*, the Muslims could be legally admitted to Makkah to perform the 'Umrah, but in the following year. After the revelation of this *āyah*, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered the Muslims with him to offer their sacrifice and leave the state of *iḥrām*, but the Muslims were reluctant to do so before reaching the place of sacrifice in the normal sequence of Hajj rites. Many of these Muslims, who had been expelled from Makkah earlier, had not visited the Holy Sanctuary for the better part of six years, and now so close were they to Makkah in their *iḥrāms*, they could not countenance waiting yet another year. Nonetheless, as they saw the Prophet (ﷺ) himself doing what he commanded them to do, they followed suit, taking off their *iḥrāms* and making the animal sacrifices.

“Whatever offering [sacrifice] you can easily afford” is a reference to livestock such as cows, camels, goats, and sheep. It is permissible to have a number of pilgrims sharing in the sacrifice of a cow or camel. This happened at Ḥudaybiyah, when seven Muslims shared the offering of a sacrificial cow or camel. A sheep or a goat, however, can only suffice as a sacrifice for one Muslim.

It seems that the reason for this license of *iḥṣār* is to facilitate Hajj and ‘Umrah, and to encourage Muslims not to fear travelling to Makkah because of the presence of potential enemies or disease. If an enemy or a contagious disease threatens a Muslim’s life in Makkah during the Hajj or ‘Umrah, then he need not be denied the rewards of his commitment. With Allah’s (ﷻ) leave for *iḥṣār*, a pilgrim may consider that he or she has completed the Hajj or ‘Umrah. Here again Allah’s (ﷻ) care and love for His believers is directed to those who make a commitment; whether or not they discharge their obligatory rituals is not as important, **“[But bear in mind]: never does their flesh reach Allah, and neither their blood; it is only your God-consciousness that reaches Him” (22:37).**

Then the words of Allah (ﷻ) provide instructions for another aspect of Hajj and ‘Umrah, **“And do not shave your heads until the offering has been sacrificed.”** This makes clear that the only time it is permissible to shave the hair off the head is in the final process of finishing the rituals of the Hajj and ‘Umrah, after descending from ‘Arafāt. The sacrifice takes place at Minā on the tenth day of Dhū al-Hijjah. But here too there are those who may be considered an exception to this general rule **“...but he from among you who is ill or suffers from a head injury shall redeem himself by fasting, or ṣadaqaḥ or [any other] act of devotion.”** Muslims who avail themselves of this license are required to either fast three days, or feed six persons in need, or sacrifice a sheep and give its meat to those who cannot feed themselves.

Then this Qur’anic passage leads to a new rule of care and concern in the performance of the Hajj and ‘Umrah rites, **“And if you are hale and secure, then he who takes advantage of an ‘Umrah before the [time of] Hajj shall give whatever offering he can easily afford.”** This means that a pilgrim may embark on the

‘Umrah journey, enter Makkah in a state of *iḥrām* at the designated areas on the outskirts of Makkah called *mīqāt*, and then proceed to all the stages, finally finishing with the *ṭawāf* of the Ka‘bah and the *sa‘ī* between the mounts of Ṣafá and Marwaḥ. After doing all this he may enter into a Hajj *iḥrām*, wait until the proper time, and then perform the Hajj. This can be done even if the ‘Umrah falls in the months of Hajj: Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qa‘dah, and the first ten days of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.

Another interpretation is that a pilgrim should set his intention at the *mīqāt* on performing a combination of both ‘Umrah and Hajj. Once he has done the ‘Umrah he awaits the time of Hajj and then does that too. Whatever he chooses to do, he should end his ‘Umrah by sacrificing an animal in order to set the ‘Umrah apart from the Hajj. This gap between the ‘Umrah and Hajj is a time of *iḥlāl*, when he should replace his *iḥrām* garments with non-ceremonial clothes, that is, his normal attire.

The phrase “...whatever offering he can easily afford” refers to any choice of camel, cow, sheep, or goat. If he is unable to afford to purchase a sacrificial animal, then he may instead make amends by “a fast for three days during the Hajj and for seven days after your return, that is, ten full [days].” It is preferable to fast these three days before standing at ‘Arafāt on the ninth day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah; as for the remaining seven days he may fast them after returning home. There is a link between the ability to offer meat to the needy and the alternative of fasting: the cognition and experience of hunger. Hunger is the human experience and problem that is supposed to be handled by *zakāh* and *ṣawm*. Its integration into the institution of Hajj and ‘Umrah emphasize the importance Allah (ﷻ) places on this issue, and how He constantly makes it a top-of-mind priority in the conscience of His committed subjects.

It should be mentioned here that the residents of the *ḥaram* area in Makkah²⁰² are not entitled to perform the ‘Umrah; they may only perform the Hajj. Therefore, they cannot combine an ‘Umrah with a Hajj; hence, they are not entitled to a “break” between the two (in Qur’anic terminology, such a state is characterized as the *tamattu’*). This, of course, means that they are not obliged to offer

the ‘Umrah sacrificial farm animal mentioned above nor are they required to fast. This is the meaning of the phrase **“And this relates to him who does not live near the sacred House.”**

Previous *āyāt* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* specified the spirit and purpose of fasting, which were infused with the concept of *taqwá*; here again, the binding thread of *taqwá* — the human awareness of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence and performance — permeates these *āyāt* about Hajj, **“And remain conscious of Allah [and His power position] and be advised that Allah is vehement in punishment.”**

The Qur’an now concentrates on more specific issues of Hajj: timing, manners, and other details. And as is the case with the majority of lessons in the Qur’an, this one too winds down with an invocation of *taqwá*.

The Hajj is [a matter of] well-known months. And whoever undertakes the Hajj in those [months] shall, during the Hajj, abstain from lewd speech, from deviant behavior and from quarreling, and whatever good you do, Allah is aware of it. And make provision for yourselves, but, verily the best of all provisions is an awareness of Allah [and His power]; remain, then, conscious of Me, O You who are of core knowledge (2:197).

This makes it clear that the Hajj has a fixed time in the year, and this time consists of a set of three months, Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qa‘dah, and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The Hajj timetable comes from Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷻ), and was known and observed even by the pre-Muhammadi Arabians. Among the *faqīhs*, there is a minor difference concerning the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. Some consider only the first ten to be Hajj days, along with the two preceding months, while others consider the whole month to be a Hajj month.

Some schools of thought restrict the *iḥrām* for Hajj to these months, while others permit *iḥrām* in other months of the year. The Saudi government, however, has made it all but impossible to enter *iḥrām* during the other nine months of the year. Indeed, the Saudi government has even made it impossible to enter *iḥrām* during most

of these three undeniable months of Hajj. Although the Qur'an states unambiguously that the Hajj is a matter of known months, there are now effectively two versions of what the Hajj time frame is: the Qur'anic version that extends the performance of the Hajj rituals to no less than 70 days, and the Saudi version that limits the Hajj to no more than 21 days.

The Saudi limitation of the Hajj from the consensual and historic Islamic time period of three months to a mere three weeks is just one of a list of policy mutations that are in direct and barefaced contradiction with the setup of Hajj and 'Umrah as outlined by the Qur'an and Sunnah, and practiced by the Prophet (ﷺ) and generations of Muslims. The second Saudi violation of Hajj performance and practice is the inaccessibility of Hajj. Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) encourage all Muslims everywhere to go to the Hajj and 'Umrah, without limit or qualification. But Saudi officialdom has placed quotas on those Muslims who want to go for Hajj. The Saudis stipulate that only one thousand Muslims are permitted to go to the Hajj per one million population. That means that if a Muslim country has 50 million people, the Saudi authorities are going to permit only 50,000 Muslims to come to Hajj each year from that country. If the world's total Muslim population was estimated to be two billion, then according to official Saudi policy only two million would be permitted to go to Hajj each year. Over a hypothetical 70 years — the life span of the average Muslim, say — 140 million of those two billion Muslims will be permitted to go to Hajj, which is just 7% of the world's Muslim population. The other 93% are effectively barred from performing one of Islam's most basic duties. Under current Saudi regulations, a Muslim would have to live for over 1,000 years to be certain of being "allowed" to perform Hajj just once in his lifetime.

Then look at the other side of the issue. Until a few years ago, Saudi Arabian nationals were permitted to go to Hajj every year if they chose to do so. Under recent changes to the regulation, Saudi citizens may not perform Hajj more than once every five years. So, compared to the same hypothetical Muslim, who would have to live 14 lifetimes or more to be able to go to Hajj just once, a Saudi

Muslim may be permitted to go to Hajj 14 times during one lifetime. What a nationalistic folly! Every Muslim should be able to see that the Saudis have nationalized Makkah in the same way that their Zionist cousins have nationalized al-Quds. Then there are the Muslims who are barred from going to Hajj indefinitely, such as this writer. All this is in addition to the policies of other governments that also restrict their own Muslim populations from going to the Hajj and ‘Umrah. For many ordinary, simple Muslims, visa restrictions, health restrictions, financial restrictions, and often bureaucratic restrictions make it impossible to go to Hajj and ‘Umrah. And these are only examples of the physical obstacles that preclude an average Muslim from performing the Hajj; as for the degradation of its spiritual and psychological elements, that will be addressed in the coming pages.

For whoever manages to break through this obstacle course to go to the Hajj the *āyāt* say he, “...shall, during the Hajj abstain from lewd speech, from deviant behavior, and from quarreling.” Lewd speech means any mention of physical intimacy or familiarity, whether in private or in the presence of others; deviant behavior refers to any type of disobedient action; and quarreling points to discordant arguments and disputes that cause agitation and leave bad feeling. None of these kinds of behaviors befit the atmosphere of the Hajj, when everyone should be focused on the glory, the excellence, and the power of the Almighty One. After these instructions to cleanse the pilgrims’ emotions and actions, Allah (ﷻ) reminds them, “...and whatever good you may do, Allah is aware of it.” It is enough for a committed Muslim to know that Allah (ﷻ) knows the good he does. This becomes an incentive to do more good deeds so that Allah (ﷻ) may reward him for it. This itself is a form of compensation before the ultimate and final compensation.

While a Muslim is in *iḥrām*, there are certain other things that are also forbidden. A person may not hunt land animals, use any scent or perfume, and may not wear any stitched or seamed clothing. The one exception to this is a woman in *iḥrām*, who is allowed to wear stitched clothing and shoes. Hajj is a time when a pilgrim should be free of any worldly attraction, attachment, or inclination.

In a hadith, Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) says, "Whoever performs the Hajj and does not speak or act out of order will have emerged from his sins as if he was just given birth by his mother."²⁰³

And the *āyāt* penetrate deep inside the Muslim, telling him, "And make provision for yourselves, but, verily, the best of all provisions is an awareness of Allah's [power]; remain, then, conscious of Me, O You who are of intimate knowledge..." This *taqwā* is the provision, the food, and the fuel of the committed Muslims. It is what keeps them going. It is enough to know that Allah (ﷻ) is the power, He is the glory, and He is the Almighty. This takes on an added meaning when it is shared with the multitudes of Muslims who are in the House of Allah (ﷻ) and its surrounding areas in Makkah where history was made by the Prophet (ﷺ) and the *muttaqī* Muslims. It is this innate, intimate knowledge that Muslims gain when they go to the Hajj and 'Umrah, provided that the Hajj and 'Umrah are performed on Allah's (ﷻ) terms and not on the terms of a monarchy that is busy thumbing its nose on the *taqwā* of Allah (ﷻ), the very symbols of which are the Hajj and 'Umrah.

In discussing the Hajj, Allah's (ﷻ) words also address some other aspects of it: that of trading or earning a wage, the *ifādah* (the popular surge) and its location, as well as the combination of *dhikr* (heavenly consciousness) and *istighfār* (pleading for repentance),

[However,] you will not be in violation [of Hajj norms] if you seek bounty from your Sustainer. And when you surge downward in multitudes from 'Arafāt, remember Allah at the Sentimental Sanctity (al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām) and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way; and surge onward together, with the multitude of all the other people who surge onward, and ask Allah to forgive you your sins, for, verily, Allah is apt to forgive, and keen on mercy (2:198).

On the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, al-Bukhārī relates that in pre-Qur'anic times Makkah was a market center known for three grand

annual bazaars: ‘Ukāz, Majnaḥ, and Dhū al-Majāz. Some Muslims did not like to see this commercial activity in Makkah during the high season of Hajj, as they felt that it was not appropriate and compatible with their devotion to Allah (ﷻ).²⁰⁴ Abū Dāwūd, also on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, relates that these conscientious Muslims avoided buying and selling during the season of Hajj, on the grounds that this was a time for *dhikr*.²⁰⁵ To this Allah (ﷻ) said, “[However], you will not be in violation [of Hajj norms] if you seek to obtain extras from your Sustainer.”

It is recorded that a man once came to Ibn ‘Umar and asked about the performance of Hajj for those who engaged in trade. The man said, “We are hired labor during the Hajj, so can we perform our Hajj as such?” Ibn ‘Umar replied, “Do you not perform the *tawāf* around the Holy Sanctuary? Do you not observe the positive behavioral standards [of Islam]? Do you not pelt the pebbles [against Satan]? And do you not shave your heads?” Upon hearing an affirmative answer, Ibn ‘Umar replied, “A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked him what you just asked me. He did not answer until Gabriel (ﷺ) disclosed the *āyah*, ‘[However], you will be committing no infraction [of Hajj standards] if you seek additional bounty from your Sustainer.’”²⁰⁶

In another narrative, Abū Ṣāliḥ, *mawlā* of ‘Umar, asked him, “O commander of the committed! You [actually] engaged in trade during the Hajj!” ‘Umar replied, “But all their livelihood [bread-winning] was at the Hajj!”²⁰⁷

The scrupulousness exhibited by these punctilious Muslims on this matter and many others they saw either as the remnants of *jāhili* behavior, or reflections of it, became a distinguishing feature of the committed Muslims. Another example was their reluctance to jog between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah when these places were under *mushrik* control, and the *mushriks* still kept idols there.

Trading and employment during the Hajj are described in Allah’s (ﷻ) words as “...seeking to gain bounty from your Sustainer.” This indicates that when one trades or works during the time of Hajj, the gains are provisions from Allah (ﷻ). The trader or seller is not providing for himself even if the labor is his;

rather, Allah (ﷻ) is providing him the benefit and the profit of legitimate transactions. Thus Allah (ﷻ) is communicating to man the fact that whatever he gains or obtains comes from Allah (ﷻ), regardless of what type of effort or means are employed. This scenario is an opportune moment to tell Muslims that by trading or exchanging commodities of monetary value during the Hajj, they will not be commercializing the Hajj, as the materialistic spirit did in previous generations, rather they will be raising commercial activity to the new level of *taqwá*, which should be on display during these months of Hajj. When morality sets the standard for both sides of the transaction, the buyer and the seller are both performing an act of *'ibādah* (conformity) to Allah (ﷻ).

Again, this point highlights the potential for *taqwá* acquisition during these months of Hajj. This overriding moral pulse is what gives a committed Muslim the edge of *'ibādah* in everything he does. When one comes to Makkah, one is coming to the center and the source of morality in the world, and part of the role of Hajj should be that this morality is to spread to the four corners of the earth. But that can only happen when Hajj regains its proper leading role. Unfortunately, today, with the Hajj under the control of the Saudis, instead of the morality of Makkah defining the standards for market ethics in the rest of the world, it is the commercialism, materialism, and consumerism of Wall Street, along with the stock markets of the modern West that have invaded Makkah. And so is it any wonder that Makkah now is a copycat image of their dog-eat-dog world, or vice versa?

The conduct of *taqwá* that permeates the marketplace at Hajj is inseparable from the *taqwá* that flows in the other stations of the Hajj. To that end Allah (ﷻ) joins the following *āyah* to the preceding one,

And when you surge downward in multitudes from 'Arafāt, remember Allah at the Sentimental Sanctity (al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām), and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way (2:198).

Standing on mount 'Arafāt is the cornerstone of the Hajj. It is recorded in virtually all the books of hadith that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

*The Hajj is 'Arafāt. The Hajj is 'Arafāt. The Hajj is 'Arafāt. Whoever is able to reach 'Arafāt before the fajr [dawn] has made it in time. The days at Miná are three; whoever goes there a couple of days earlier or a couple of days later is at no fault.*²⁰⁸

The time for standing at 'Arafāt begins at noon on the day of 'Arafāt, which is the 9th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, and extends until the dawn of the following day, the Day of Sacrifice (Yawm al-Naḥr). There is another *fiqhī* opinion that the day of 'Arafāt begins not at noon but with the break of day. This opinion relies on a Ṣaḥīḥ hadith narrated by Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,

*A man says he approached Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) at al-Muzdalifah as he was proceeding to ṣalāḥ and said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! I have travelled from Mount Ṭay'; I have burdened my means of transportation and exhausted myself. I left no hill without ascending it. Have I lost my opportunity to perform my Hajj?" The Prophet (ﷺ) answered, "Whoever has made it to this (our ṣalāḥ) and stands with us [here] until we disperse, and before that has stood at 'Arafāt either in the night or the day, whoever manages to do all that has completed his Hajj and depleted his sins."*²⁰⁹

The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) extended the time in which pilgrims stand on Mount 'Arafāt until the *fajr* of the following day, the 10th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. In doing so, the Prophet (ﷺ) broke with the *mushrik* practice of Hajj. The *mushriks* used to disperse from 'Arafāt before the sunset, but the Prophet (ﷺ) made it clear that the Muslims have until sunrise of the following day to disperse.

In the only Hajj he performed with the rest of the Muslims, the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed all of those who were assembled at 'Arafāt. He began by thanking Allah (ﷻ) and praising Him. Then he said,

*This is the Grand Day of Hajj. Indeed the mushriks and the pagans would leave this place before the Sun sets ... But we shall leave before the Sun rises [in the night to follow]. Our instructions contravene those of the people of shirk.*²¹⁰

As the Prophet (ﷺ) fulfilled his only Hajj, and was leaving ‘Arafāt, he said, “O people! Be calm, compose yourselves.”²¹¹ At a steady pace he passed from one place to another, up and down the terrain, until he arrived at al-Muzdalifah. There he prayed *Ṣalāt al-Maghrib* and *al-‘Ishā’* with one *adhān* and two *iqāmahs*. Then he rode his mount (al-Qaṣwá) until he arrived at al-Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām. There he turned toward the *qiblah* beseeching Allah (ﷻ), glorifying, extolling, and praising Him. Then before sunrise he left. This is what the *āyah* is referring to when Allah (ﷻ) says,

And when you surge downward in multitudes from ‘Arafāt, remember Allah at the Sentimental Sanctity (al-Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām) and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way (2:198).

Al-Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām is al-Muzdalifah. The Qur’an instructs Muslims here to intensify their concentration on Allah (ﷻ) at this particular station of the Hajj. Then the Qur’an reminds them that recalling Allah (ﷻ) is itself a form of guidance from Allah (ﷻ). These multitudes and masses of Muslims at such a place at that time are an expression of gratitude to Allah (ﷻ). The Muslims are then reminded of the way they were before Allah (ﷻ) sent them the gift of Islam, “...you had indeed been lost on your way.”

Those first-generation Muslims could appreciate the contrast between their errant ways in *jāhiliyah* and their newly acquired sense of direction and purpose. The pre-Islamic Arabians, much like our post-Islamic Arabians today, had no idea of their status among the nations of the world. Their minds would roam the non-sensical world of myth, pagan deities, and unsubstantiated traditional follies while their bodies would roam the empty desert

beyond which the larger world was unknown. Those Arabians were in the habit of worshipping idols, jinns, and angels. Angels, in their understanding of things, were the daughters of God; jinn were also supposed to have some kinship with God. Such were their outrageous ideas of the divine.

There is an important point to ponder at this juncture when all the Muslims at the Hajj are expected to be at Mount ‘Arafāt on the 9th day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The point is this: during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), when the number of Muslims may have been in the tens of thousands, it was easy for them to stand together at ‘Arafāt on that one day; today there are tens of millions of Muslims every year who want to go to Hajj, provided there are no artificial restrictions placed on the Ummah. When, eventually, all these barriers come falling down and the Muslim Ummah has open doors to the Hajj, there will certainly be tens of millions of Muslims wanting to fulfill their Hajj obligation. But the question is: how can tens of millions of Muslims stand on Mount ‘Arafāt on that one day, as they are required to do? Obviously this calls for some bold thinking from our respected *faqīhs* and ‘alims.

Among the things they will need to think about as they ponder a solution are the following,

1. ascertain the capacity of Mount ‘Arafāt, that is, the total number of people who can stand on Mount ‘Arafāt at one time;
2. decide how long it would be reasonable for one capacity-full to stand on ‘Arafāt before making room for others to come and stand there too;
3. consider whether there are adjacent areas that might, under the circumstances, be considered part of Mount ‘Arafāt; and
4. consider whether it might be in conformity with the “gathering and congregation-building of Hajj” to define Yawm ‘Arafāt not as a 24-hour day, but rather as a period which may extend into several days or even weeks if that is what it will take to accommodate the many millions who will come from the four corners of the earth to fulfill their Hajj duty.

The word *yawm* in Arabic is not linguistically inflexible. It can be used for a 24-hour day, but it can also be used for a longer period of time. The literal interpretation of *Yawm ‘Arafāt*, the key period of time for the performance of Hajj, need not be limited to a 24-hour day, when all the *āyāt* and hadith are exhorting all Muslims to go to the Hajj.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, divisions of tribal warfare and clannish feuds were a feature of social life. Arabians, in the thinking of the more virile nations at that time, were marginal. The Arabian community was characterized by the tyranny of the powerful warlord, tribal lord, or family lord. There was no central authority that stood for practical justice. Sexual immorality was rampant, and the family unit was not protected or respected. These are among the things that early Muslims must have understood when Allah (ﷻ) says, **“...and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way.”**

These Arabians turned Muslims could immediately relate to the qualitative change that transformed their hearts and their homeland. Their imagination, their memories, and their emotions, collective and individual, were aware of the contrast between what they were and what they had become. They needed but look around during the Hajj and see with their own eyes this unprecedented gathering of what used to be quarreling and divided peoples. This was nothing short of a miracle. There was no power on earth that could bring them together. But now, at Hajj, these reborn Muslims saw not a “natural miracle” but a social miracle. These are the miracles that Muslims have to notice, the miracles that occur in the realm of human development and not in the realm of physical or material change. It is with this realization that Muslims in the Hajj appreciate the hand of Allah (ﷻ) at work through the consolidation and conformity of Muslims to His Will.

This applies to any generation or nation. Who are we when we are devoid of Islam in our lives? The Islamic transformation is profound because it is thorough and conclusive. It is not a legalistic one only. It is not enough to have Islamic laws and law-

enforcers; what is needed, before and after having Islamic laws, is the Islamic value system, morality, and an all-embracing adaptation to Allah (ﷻ). One way of gauging the presence of Islamic order on earth is the presence of a vibrant and uninhibited Hajj, in which all Muslims are free to come to Makkah, and to stand on 'Arafāt, and to appreciate this open, worldwide assembly of Allah's (ﷻ) *mu'mins* on earth.

In this sense the Hajj represents a transnational, transracial, and translingual annual meeting of hearts, minds, and souls. Looked at from another angle, every breakdown in the international frontiers and borders is a step toward convening the Qur'anic Hajj. Think about a world that has no restrictions on the movement of people from one land to another. The Arabians could be thankful for the Hajj that brought them out of their tribal enclaves and placed them on par with all the others who would come to Makkah each year. Imagine a humanity that can take account of and treasure an institution of Hajj that breaks down the artificial and official barriers that divide and segregate the human species. How wonderful would that moment be when the message and morale of Hajj are transmitted from Makkah to the rest of the world and humanity becomes a brotherhood that thrives within a divine order on earth: Islam.

The contents of the true Hajj expose and dwarf what is called the United Nations. The United Nations stands at the other extreme of what the Hajj stands for. Never has humanity been more divided and more miserable than it has been since the inception of the United Nations. Instead of the peoples of the world coming together in a spirit of brotherhood and common humility before the power of Allah (ﷻ), only the illegitimate and amoral leaders of communities congregate together in mutual disagreement under the auspices of the United Nations. This was a body established by and for the purposes of a civilizational power based on all the values of materialism, arrogance, greed, and exploitation that are almost as far from Islam as it is possible for human beings to be. A more apt characterization of this "Makkah" is the Divided Nations.

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, some estimates suggest that 90+ million people have been killed, not in tornadoes, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis, or volcanoes, but in wars between nations, all of whom are represented at the “United Nations.” In our time wars are raging in Africa (Sudan/Darfur, the Congo, Somalia, and Zimbabwe), the Islamic East (in and around Palestine, Iraq, and Cyprus), Central Asia and the Caucuses (Ichkeria/Chechnya, Dagestan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir), the Far East (the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia), Eastern Europe (Balkans, Ukraine, and Georgia), among other places. These conflicts are minor compared to the massive conflagrations that marked the globalization of Western power. Such historical experiences would not be possible in a world order embodying the values that underpin the intent and purpose of the Hajj, which among other things is to bring the human family together. We need to acknowledge and celebrate the glory of Allah (ﷻ) not only as individuals in our home and not only as communities in our *masjids*, but also as a humanity at the Hajj, **“and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way.”**

The Hajj should be the Muslims’ annual conference, at which Muslims from all over the world gather to meet with each other, talk to each other, and understand each others’ concerns. The only thing they have in common is their allegiance to Allah (ﷻ); but this is a strong commonality indeed. It eclipses all other identities, and is symbolized by the uniform attire, *iḥrām*, that neutralizes the expression of all forms of identity or social hierarchy represented by suits, fancy clothes, and formal dress. There is no individuality, no kinship or race identity that can override the sense of community and equality that characterizes the Hajj. The only binding force on this occasion is the spirit of humility and ideological brotherhood that unites those souls. All sense of blood kinship is replaced by faith kinship. Islam permeates the hearts and moves the minds.

In the generations before the Prophet (ﷺ), the Quraysh were known as al-Hums (the zealots). They used to enjoy privileges and

immunities not available to other Arabians during the Hajj. One of these privileges was that Quraysh would not assemble with the rest of the Arabians on Mount 'Arafāt. Nor would they surge forward from there as others did. But the Hajj is the springboard of equality, hence this command to yesteryear's Quraysh, and others who show the same arrogance today, such as the Saudis,

...and surge onward together with the multitude of all other people who surge onward, and ask Allah to forgive you your sins, for, verily, Allah is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace (2:199).

This *āyah* equalizes all Muslims during the Hajj, and constitutes a slap in the face to any kind of "Islamic elitism." This *āyah* knocks out of the Hajj the Qurayshī/Saudi feature of class distinction. Of course it was not easy for Quraysh to swallow this Qur'anic pill. How dare Muhammad (ﷺ) bring "down" the "nobility" of Quraysh and have them mix with commoners? The Quraysh, like their contemporary Saudi counterparts, thought that their *ifāḍah* should be distinct and separate from the rest of the Muslims. Today the Saudis do their *tawāf* of the Ka'bah only after evacuating the Masjid of the Muslim "riff-raff." Dare any of our esteemed 'alims make the link between the ruling Quraysh of the Prophet's (ﷺ) time and the Saudis of our time?

Before the reform of the Hajj by the Prophet (ﷺ), the Quraysh would stand at al-Muzdalifah while the other *hajjīs* were at 'Arafāt. When the others were surging from 'Arafāt, the Quraysh would surge from al-Muzdalifah. The Prophet's (ﷺ) practical behavior was a realistic expression of this *āyah*. The Quraysh's privileged status was not restricted to this "exception" at the Hajj. Their arrogance extended also into their social lives; a Qurayshī would not allow his daughter or sister to marry an Arabian commoner. Then came Muhammad (ﷺ), from one of the best families of the Quraysh, yet he married his cousin Zaynab bint Jaḥsh to his dependent (*mawlā*), Zayd ibn Ḥārith.

The implications of this *āyah* have been lost in the way the pilgrims are directed in and out of Makkah today. Are there any Muslim *hajjīs* today who are conscious of the fact that 'Arafāt is sup-

posed to be the melting pot of the Ummah? Is there anyone at the Hajj to remind Muslims that Quraysh at one time used to stand at al-Muzdalifah instead of being with all of the rest of the *hajjīs*? Is there a strong conscious current of equality and humility, brotherhood and humanity, caring and sharing with each other? Is there anyone around to remind the *hajjīs* that they are in Hajj to shed all the artificial, formal, and structural barriers that serve to divide Muslims in the world outside of Hajj? If anyone is looking for the epitome of brotherhood — the feeling that men should treat one another like family — should he not easily get a sense of it in this Hajj? But alas, the answer to these questions is no. The way the Hajj is set up and run by the Saudi officials, none of these meanings survive. Bigwigs come to the Hajj, take off their clothes of status and put on the *iḥrām* to fool the rest of the Muslims into believing they are “brothers.” No sooner than shedding the clothes of *iḥrām*, these officials go back to their homelands, governmental departments, and offices to execute policies that stereotype and criminalize the sincere Muslims in the Ummah.

Although Muslims are unable to demonstrate this equality and oneness of the Ummah outside Makkah, they have no excuse for being unable to demonstrate it in Makkah. In fact the *jāhiliyah* has reclaimed Makkah, and the Saudi government is the agent of this profane reclamation. The Ummah should, in theory, have the strength to exert itself in Makkah, especially during the Hajj and ‘Umrah. Regrettably, that is not the case at the moment. We can be certain that this occupation of Makkah and Madinah will not continue forever. We are also certain that the Saudis will eventually be removed by coming generations of Muslims who, with reliance and confidence in Allah (ﷻ), will redeem Makkah and Madinah; then the Hajj will once again be what it is supposed to be.

And when you have performed your acts of adulation, [continue to] bear Allah in mind as you would bear your own fathers in mind, nay, with a yet keener remembrance! For there are people who [merely] pray, “O our Sustainer! Give us in this world,” and such

shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come. But there are among them such as pray, “O our Sustainer! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire;” it is these that shall have their portion [of happiness] in return for what they have earned. And Allah is swift in reckoning (2:200–202).

The social norms engulfing the pre-Islamic pilgrimage were defined in terms of the grand gatherings that followed the ritualistic pilgrimage. These grand gatherings were mentioned above as the markets and trading-posts of ‘Ukāz, Majnaḥ, and Dhū al-Majāz. These were not only strictly economic opportunities, but also provided an excuse for Arabians to show off their ancestral pride, ethnic pomp and linguistic skills, particularly poetry. The Arabians of pre-Islamic times had nothing better to occupy their minds; they were not yet in possession of a worldwide mission in which they could match word with deed. But when they became Muslims with a new scope of activity, the words of Allah (ﷻ) instructed the Muslim pilgrims to amplify and glorify Allah (ﷻ) instead of the previous practice of lauding fathers and forefathers, **“And when you have finished performing your acts of adulation, [continue to] bear Allah in mind as you would bear your own fathers in mind — not only so, but with yet a keener remembrance.”**

This *āyah* clearly substitutes the old tradition of ethnic and linguistic pride with the new norm of extolling and praising Allah (ﷻ). From this way of performing Hajj the Muslims should leave Makkah with new standards for the rest of the world, standards of equality, justice, brotherhood, and allegiance. But then, human nature being what it is, there will still be those who are world-focused, world-centered, and world-oriented, with no regard or consideration for the world to come. Hence,

For there are people who [merely] pray, “O our Sustainer! Give us in this world,” and such shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come (2:200).

Even immediately after Hajj there will still be people who are so attached to materialism that they almost forget the practical meanings of Hajj, and beseech Allah (ﷻ) to increase their worldly possessions. Arabians would come to Hajj and pray to Allah (ﷻ) saying, “O Allah! Make it [the coming year] a year of plentiful precipitation, a year of prosperous provisions, and a year of bountiful fertility.”²¹² In their urgent and earnest petitions to Allah (ﷻ) they would behave and present themselves as if the life to come does not exist. The *āyah*, of course, is not limited to the peninsula Arabians; it addresses all such people because they appear to be a permanent feature of human societies. These types are obsessed with owning and having in this world only; they may get what they want or part of what they desire in this world, but they will not have anything in the next world.

Conversely, the *āyāt* continue on and describe another type of people, whose horizons are expanded and who can see themselves in this world and in the coming one at the same time. They are balanced between the necessities of this earthly existence and the requirements of a conscientious heavenly homecoming. They desire what is good in this life but that does not cause them to forget the life that is approaching, “**O our Sustainer! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and spare us the torment of the fire.**” They ask Allah (ﷻ) for the merits, good qualities, and assets of both this worldly life and their impending new existence. They are not fussy about what type of good they are asking for. In the character that behooves them, they leave it all to Allah (ﷻ). So Allah (ﷻ) chooses for them and they are satisfied with His choice. The effects of Hajj should produce balanced pilgrims who are anxious to have the worthwhile benefits of this world, and also the worthwhile treasures of the one to come.

Even as the Muslims are leaving their high days of Hajj they are instructed to retain a balanced consideration of their presence in this life and their presence in the oncoming life. The world can never become a true Muslim’s preoccupation. Materialism has a way of trapping and limiting the otherwise free and expansive soul of humans. Hajj acts as a fresh start into a world that is tempered

and proportional. Hajj, when performed the way it was intended by Allah (ﷻ), can recharge the committed Muslim with confidence to remake the world according to the spirit and social climate of Hajj.

Then the days, rituals, and rites of Hajj wind down with another reminder of Allah (ﷻ),

And bear Allah in mind during the appointed days; but he who hurries away within two days shall incur no sin, and he who tarries longer shall incur no sin, provided that he is conscious of Allah. So remain conscious of Allah, and know that unto Him you shall be gathered (2:203).

These days of heightened God-consciousness are probably the day of 'Arafāt, the Day of Sacrifice (Yawm al-Naḥr), and the three days following this sacrifice, known as the days of *tashrīq*; on the calendar, this would correspond to Dhū al-Ḥijjah 9–13. This crescendo of God-consciousness is expressed by praising Allah (ﷻ), saying *Allāhu akbar*, after each *ṣalāh*, at the time of throwing stones, as well as at the time of the sacrifice (*al-uḍḥiyah*). In this atmosphere of perception and recognition of Allah (ﷻ), the pilgrim's sense of time may backslide or lapse. For this reason, in the last few days of the Hajj, a committed Muslim should not be "nailed" because of some *fiqhī* technicalities. The *āyah* is clear on this: as long as the element of *taqwá* overrides any other consideration,

...but he who hurries away within two days shall incur no sin, and he who tarries longer shall incur no sin, provided that he is conscious of Allah's [power]. Hence, entrench this *taqwá* of Allah [in you], and know that unto Him you shall be gathered (2:203).

The power of Allah (ﷻ) has to be considered by all the Muslim *hajjis* as a factor in the events of the world around them. In our world today there are earthly powers that frighten Muslims,

other earthly powers that dominate Muslims, and still others that are at war with Muslims. And each year the Muslims go to Hajj and have no opportunity to bring themselves together to concentrate on the power of Allah (ﷻ).

The forgoing lesson places the occasion of Hajj outside any *jāhili* culture. These *āyāt* redefine and reposition Hajj where it belongs: in the particular worldview and civilization of Islam. Hajj has its own Islamic setting which should never be compromised by people's cultures, customs, or convenience. Whenever the Hajj is tainted or troubled with practices and policies that empty it of its meanings, it becomes the Muslims' responsibility to rescue and relocate it within its god-defined and ordained purpose. When the Muslims — ideally, the Qur'an in flesh — remake this Hajj the way Allah (ﷻ) wants it to be, there will be no lingering effects of that "Hajj" of the status quo, which is now in vogue, during the reign of *jāhili* societies and *jāhili* states. In a sense, Hajj has to be restored, renewed, and regenerated.


Hajj, like *ṣalāh*, *ṣawm*, *zakāh*, and the *shahādah*, cannot be left to disintegrate, decline, and decompose into empty rituals and half-hearted motions. Hajj cannot be allowed to become a part of the national tradition or national culture of the government that rules over Makkah, Madinah, and al-Quds. The Hajj must be restored to its fundamental purpose of serving the human progression of adapting to and doing Allah's (ﷻ) Will.

Enhancing Man's Understanding of Human Nature

- (2:204) And among people [you will find] a kind of person whose manner of speaking impresses you in this life, and [the more so as] he cites Allah as witness to what is in his heart, while [in fact] his contestation is invidious.
- (2:205) And whenever he prevails, he goes about the earth to wreak havoc, and to devitalize tilth and progeny: and Allah does not love corruption.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ
 عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ﴿٢٠٤﴾ وَإِذَا تَوَلَّىٰ سَعَىٰ فِي
 الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
 الْفُسَادَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ
 فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي
 نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠٧﴾
 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا
 خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٠٨﴾ فَإِن زَلَلْتُمْ
 مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ
 ﴿٢٠٩﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْعَمَامِ
 وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٢١٠﴾ سَلِّ بِنِي
 إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمَا ءَاتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ ءَايَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَمَن يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا
 جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢١١﴾ زَيْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا
 وَيَسْحَرُونَ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ
 وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢١٢﴾ كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ

اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ
 لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اُخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اُخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
 أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا لِمَا اُخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى
 صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٣﴾ أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ
 مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَاءُ وَزُلُّوا حَتَّى
 يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ

 قَرِيبٌ

- (2:206) And whenever he is told, “Be conscious of Allah’s [power] his false pride drives him to sin, wherefore hell will be his allotted portion — and how vile a resting place!
- (2:207) But among people there is [also] a [kind of] person who would willingly exchange his own self for the gratification of Allah: and Allah is most sympathetic toward His attendants.
- (2:208) O you who are firmly committed to Allah! Enter into a state of peacefulness with Allah, and follow not Satan’s footsteps, for verily he is your open foe.
- (2:209) And if you should stumble after evidence of the truth has come to you, then know that indeed Allah is Awe-Inspiring, Wise.
- (2:210) Are these people waiting, perchance, for Allah to reveal Himself to them in the shadows of the clouds,

together with the angels; although [by then] all will have been decided, and unto Allah all things will have been brought back?

- (2:211) Ask the Children of Israel how many perceivable messages We have given them! But if one alters Allah's command after it has reached him, verily, Allah is severe in retribution!
- (2:212) Unto those who are bent on denying the truth, the life of this world [alone] seems attractive; hence they scoff at those who are securely committed [to Allah], but they who are conscious of Allah's [power presence] shall be above them on Resurrection Day. And Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.
- (2:213) All mankind were once one single community; [then they began to differ] whereupon Allah raised up the Prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views. Yet none other than the selfsame people who had been granted this [revelation] began, out of mutual jealousy, to disagree about its meaning after all evidence of the truth had come to them. But Allah guided the committed believers to the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed, for Allah guides onto a straight way him who wills [to be guided].
- (2:214) [But] do you think that you could enter paradise without suffering like those [committed devotees] who passed away before you? Misfortune and hardship befell them, and so shaken were they that the Apostle, and the committed disciples with him, would exclaim, "When will Allah's succor come?" Oh, certainly, Allah's succor is [always] near! (al-Baqarah:204-214).

The previous lesson about the Hajj taught that the character of the Hajj has to be remade from its *jāhili* mode to its Islamic manner.

Here the Qur'an is enhancing man's understanding of human nature. As in the previous lesson, the words of the Qur'an take the self-impressed human out of the glamour of what is to the portrait of what should be. Anyone who can understand what Allah (ﷻ) is saying must hope for everyone else to read and understand what Allah (ﷻ) has to say directly to each heart and mind.

In these *āyāt* are descriptions of two characters. The first is the charismatically cunning, whose speech and charm can sway people's judgement. The Qur'an is presenting a personality profile of the types who, on closer observation, turn out to be self-centered. Their outward persona, impressive and effervescent though it may be, hides an antithetic core reality. These are the types of people who, when they are advised to remember and adhere to Allah (ﷻ), will have nothing of it; they do not want to be reminded of God, truth, or justice. Something peculiar happens when they are counseled about Allah (ﷻ); they are fueled by their vainglory away from forthrightness and justice. That is why they do harm to human life and to other forms of life. The other type is of the committed and faithful Muslim who gives himself away to please Allah (ﷻ). He, himself, and his resources are all Allah's (ﷻ). That is because he is fully conscious of Allah (ﷻ): Allah (ﷻ) is in his conscience.

After contrasting the two personality profiles, Allah (ﷻ) calls on those who have committed themselves to Him and have assimilated into His will without any ambivalent attitude or intention. This assimilation attitude of the Muslims is decidedly superior to that of the Israelis, who conditioned their assimilation into God's will by asking Him to produce some miracle for their curiosity and satisfaction. This assimilation, as we shall see, is the state of serenity with Allah (ﷻ).

The Qur'an's words capture the response and ridicule of those who deny God by making fun of this "peace and serenity with God." The final word on this is Allah's (ﷻ), **"...but they who are conscious of Allah's [power presence] shall be above them on Resurrection Day."**

Then the heavenly discourse sheds light on the divisions and differences of peoples. It divulges the function of scripture as the

reference point against which other things can be evaluated, “...so that it can decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views.”

The words of this divine Writ carry the maturing Muslim’s attention further into the fact that it cannot be easy to live and die by scripture. There will be challenges, demanding situations, contests, and fights along this scriptural course. There are no shortcuts and no magical formulas. The sacred words are telling the committed faithful to prepare themselves and let the will of Allah (ﷻ) take its course.

Thus does Allah (ﷻ) post yet another lesson in this extended process of building the human being, the human community, and the human society — a society that will be able to work the will of Allah (ﷻ) on earth with confidence and assurance. The results are not ours, the results of what we do for Allah (ﷻ) are His.

Two Personalities: One Truth

A closer look at the first three *āyāt* above uncovers meanings that have been obscured by the public Muslim mind, which has succumbed to an unacknowledged and inglorious secularization of the Qur’an’s declamation.

Among people [you will find] a type of person whose eloquence [and intonation] impresses you in this life, and [the more so as] he summons Allah as witness to what is in his heart, while [in fact] his [inherent complex of] attitudes are contemptuous. And whenever he dominates, he goes through the world to cause corruption and to kill life: and Allah does not like corruption. And whenever he is told, “Be conscious of Allah’s [power],” his egocentricity propels him into [deeper] sin, for which reason hell will be his allotted portion — and how ghastly a final port [that he prepared for himself] (2:204–206).

The key formulation of this *āyah* appears to be not a simple person who has a way with words, nor a local preacher who says one thing and does something else, although these types may fall under the general meaning of the *āyāt*. The full extent of this *āyah* seems to be absent from Muslim thought. What has been overlooked is the fact that this is the personality profile of a demagogue who has the resources and the power to implement policies and strategies that are to the detriment of people and resources. There seems to be a combination of charisma, logic, and religiosity in this Qur'anic biographical profile. The person appears, by worldly standards, to be photogenic, reasonable, and pious. He cites God as a witness to his intentions. This is an excellent description of politicians and heads of state in the contemporary Muslim world, who appeal to the passions and prejudices of their audiences. In Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, among other places, there have been excellent figures who have demonstrated the meanings of this *āyah*. And on a global scale there are “leaders” who, by quoting God and scripture, give the false impression that they are on the right side of all issues, while in actual fact they are malicious. The test is in what they do, not what they say. These *āyāt* are a wake-up call to Muslims who are able to understand what Allah (ﷻ) is saying and simultaneously apply that to what man is doing. Relating this *āyah* to the real world requires the curious Muslim to go beyond the impressive charisma of such and such a leader and look closely at his policies and their consequences.

One policy that such leaders promote is “population control.” The Qur'an never uses such a phrase. Modern “population control” is a broad policy to “contain” population growth or, more shrewdly put, “to modulate population” growth as arbitrarily defined nations may require. It is distinct from birth control, which is the provision of contraceptive facilities to individual families or women. These two perspectives overlap, however. Promoters of birth control have usually emphasized large-scale programs for “family planning;” and conversely family planning by individual choice has been the means that population control sponsors typically espouse. These policy choices, we are told, are informed by the science of demog-

raphy, which is the study of population structure and trends, based on “vital statistics.”

The development of “population control” into a worldwide policy — whose feasibility depended on a cheap, reliable, and safe chemical means of contraception — is not, as the mainstream media claims, a post-World War II innovation led by the United Nations’ World Health Organization in collaboration with the foreign aid programs of developed countries.²¹³ Since the marketing of the contraceptive pill in 1960, abortion laws have been relaxed in many countries to provide a more euphemistic way to kill life off.

Although the feasibility of “population control” as a public policy depended upon advances in reproductive technology, thoughts on the subject occur early in the record of civilization. In China, which has been a populous nation since antiquity, Confucians sought to balance population to resources and formed the concept of optimum population level.²¹⁴ In Western antiquity, observations on population fluctuations tended to link prosperity with population growth, while population decline was linked with regression. These ideas were influenced by the belief that civilized life depends on the urban hub, whose population density promotes, and is promoted by, prosperity and good government. Medieval European scholars did not commonly write on these questions, but one non-European who did, the historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldūn, noted that in North Africa the association between population growth and prosperity was valid.²¹⁵

It is no coincidence that the above *āyah* mentions the debilitation of human life along with the enfeeblement of plant life. One indication in the modern age of this phenomenon is the presence of “population control” with what is termed “genetic engineering” (bioengineering, biotechnology). Now listen to how the “impressive” presentation of this modern development is presented to our susceptible minds — susceptible when they are starved of Qur’anic meanings — by those who use words to mislead. Genetic engineering is the chemical modification of genes of plants, animals, and micro-organisms. Typically, gene sequences from one organism are removed and inserted into the chromosomes of another organism in

order to create the ability to synthesize new proteins in the recipient (transgenic product). A genetically engineered bovine growth hormone now being sold in the United States can boost milk production in cows by 10%. Genetic engineering may improve the protein quality of plant foods and feed for livestock. (But who can assure us, the consumers, what the final result of our consumption of genetically modified foods will be in the short or long run?)

Research is progressing to develop protein-enhanced beans, corn, soy beans, wheat, alfalfa, rapeseed, and sunflower seeds. A renewed interest in the “disease-prevention” and “health-enhancing” properties of foods has sparked other efforts to improve these characteristics in foods; for example, carrots are being bred with increased levels of the antioxidant beta-carotene.

Technology is producing plants resistant to insects, viral diseases, and herbicides. Some of the first experiments with genetically engineered crops have yielded tomato plants that produce animal antibodies against viral infections, conferring disease resistance. Alternatively, “infection-resistant genes” from other plant species have been inserted into tomatoes, making them resistant to bacterial infection. Planting crops that have herbicide-tolerant genes may help farmers to control weeds in crops that would otherwise be damaged. One method is to insert an altered gene for a specific plant enzyme normally targeted or inactivated by a given herbicide. The change can make the enzyme insensitive to the herbicide. Another approach is to insert a gene for a new enzyme that detoxifies the herbicide. For example, a gene from petunia, a flowering South American plant related to the potato, protects soybean plants from herbicides; a bacterial gene inserted into corn protects it against the European corn-borer, a caterpillar considered to be a worldwide pest because it feeds on plants, especially maize.

Genetic alteration may yield crops that can grow in cooler or warmer, wetter or drier climates. Plants may some day produce drugs such as vaccines and human hormones. Genes from other species can be incorporated into a plant genome to develop products that are more nutritious or are sweeter; have a better flavor or

more color for consumer appeal; or have a longer shelf life. The first genetically-engineered whole food to be approved by the United States FDA (Food and Drug Administration) is a tomato, which has an extended shelf life because of an altered gene that inhibits softening. Viruses affect many crops, ranging from wheat, corn, and potatoes to tomatoes and citrus fruit. By inserting a gene coding for the protein of an attacking virus into a susceptible plant species, the recipient plants tolerate tobacco, alfalfa, and cucumber mosaic viruses as well as potato viruses. Virus-resistant potatoes and tomatoes have been “field-tested.”

A number of concerns about this biotechnology have been expressed by food scientists, consumer groups, and policymakers. There is concern, that plant geneticists may engineer crops to improve processing and yield at the expense of good nutrition. Cosmetic changes could be developed that might mask unripe or over-ripe foods. Safety is another concern. Genetically engineered plants could make higher levels of known toxic substances. Viral genes that can increase a plant’s resistance to a pest could produce altered plant viruses that may harm other plants. Transferring genes could cause allergies. For example, genes transferred from a peanut plant to another plant could also cause the new hybrid variety to trigger a reaction in those with peanut allergies. The FDA does not require special labeling for genetically-engineered foods, except to potential allergens. Another possibility is the production of plant toxins in genetically engineered food. On the other hand, several fears about genetically-engineered products have not materialized: designer plants and bacteria so far produced do not change animals, nor do they appear to spread from the area of use.

The above “scientific” statements seem compelling and seductive, all the more so if they are put forward by some charismatic, scripture-quoting leader. And this is precisely what Allah’s (ﷻ) words are warning about. How many charismatic leaders have the Muslims had in the past few generations who have sugar-coated their counterproductive policies with quotes from the Qur’an, or by invoking the name of Allah (ﷻ), or by presenting themselves to the public on television, attending Jumu‘ah or ‘Id prayers at the

masjid, or performing their Hajj or ‘Umrah. They even employ reciters of the Qur’an to inaugurate their speeches with selected verses from the divine Book.

“And whenever he is told, ‘Be conscious of Allah’s [power],’ his partiality drives him into contemptibility, wherefore hell will be his allotted portion — and how vile a resting place!” And these types were told by the Islamic movement or Islamic leaders, **“Be conscious of Allah’s [power].”** That is what the Islamic movement in Egypt, among other places in the Muslim world, did for the better part of the last century. This is what the Islamic movement is doing now almost everywhere where it has not been subverted and contained by sweet words and bitter experiences. But these types of rulers do not want to hear of Allah’s (ﷻ) power, so they armor themselves with arrogance and persecute the Islamic voices. Wherefore Hell will be the assigned destiny of these rulers who invoke God’s name but defile it by their vile deeds.

The aforementioned “scientific” arguments for population control and genetic engineering are examples of the impressive presentations expressed by the personality type that is highlighted in this *āyah*. In reality, this “confidence man” or con man, as the Qur’an makes clear, conceals hostility and animosity to life, which of course is something he will never admit in public.

The answer as to why these types of decision makers want to decrease the number of humans (not all humans, but rather the “inferior races”) and increase the quantity of agricultural output at the expense of its quality, is greed — greed for more power, and greed for more wealth. This is the corruption that Allah (ﷻ) abhors and condemns, **“And Allah does not love corruption.”**

One fact of this *āyah* cannot be overemphasized, even though it goes popularly unnoticed by run-of-the-mill preachers, pundits, sages, and sheikhs who fail to read the *āyah*’s power definition. This *āyah* spotlights those who have the capacity to develop a public image that conflicts with their true convictions, and beyond that who are able to cause corruption on a large scale.

Then comes a short and succinct *āyah* that defines another character altogether different from the previous one, **“But there is**

[also] a [kind of] person who would, willingly exchange his own self for the gratification of Allah, and Allah is most sympathetic toward His attendants.”

Ibn ‘Abbās, Anas ibn Mālik, Sa‘īd ibn al-Mussayab, Abū ‘Uthman al-Nahdī, ‘Ikrimah, among others, said this *āyah* was revealed on account of Suḥayb ibn Sinān al-Rūmī. As Suḥayb became a Muslim in Makkah he wanted to seek asylum (embark on his *hijrah*), but the Makkans banned him from leaving Makkah with his wealth. They told him that if he wanted to leave he would be free to do so but without his money and assets. So Suḥayb decided to forsake his money and wealth so that he could leave Makkah and join the pioneering Muslims in Madinah. In addressing this selflessness Allah (ﷻ) revealed the *āyah*.²¹⁶

One might expect that in contrast to the previous *āyah*, this one would describe a personality characterized by good deeds without the flowery speeches and empty claims of the other character. In this vein, the reader may expect a person whose words match his works and who says what is in his heart. But the *āyah* goes further than this rhetorical dissimilarity, **“But there is [also] a [kind of] person who would willingly exchange his own self for the contentment of Allah.”**

Think about it. Allah (ﷻ) has endowed societies with persons whose goal in life is to “sell” themselves to Allah (ﷻ) in exchange for His satisfaction and acceptance. When a person consciously and intentionally gives his life to Allah (ﷻ) he makes sure that what he says is the truth as he sees it, and that what he does is right, good, and acceptable to Allah (ﷻ). The sincerity in his heart cannot tolerate speaking with two tongues, wearing two faces, and playing two roles. Nothing in this world — no status, no power, no wealth — are tradable, for the joy of yielding himself to Allah (ﷻ). People who live one *āyah* of the Qur’an also find the meanings of other *āyāt* of the Qur’an. In this instance a supplementary *āyah* is,

And on the Day when those who were bent on denying the truth will be brought within sight of the Fire

[they will be told], “You have exhausted your [share of] good things in your worldly life, having enjoyed them [without any thought of the hereafter]; and so today you shall be requited with the suffering of humiliation for having gloried on earth in your arrogance, offending against all that is right, and for all your iniquitous doings!” (46:20).

In other *āyāt* this exchange is characterized as a market activity: man sells his life to Allah (ﷻ) and Allah (ﷻ) buys it from him. It is as if the Qur’an wants us to take our market instincts and sign with Allah (ﷻ) a deal that will generate profits, gains, and benefits without limits. A sample of this trade with Allah (ﷻ),

Behold, Allah has bought of the committed Muslims their lives and their possessions... Rejoice, then, in the bargain which you have made with Him, for this, this is the triumph supreme! (9:111).

Note that the seller is man, the buyer is Allah (ﷻ), the commodity is human life and the price is Allah’s (ﷻ) satisfaction.

In the end, what is being discussed here are two states of mind within the rational and *ghaybi* range of the human mind. But states of mind are not static, especially the collective, psychological orientations of societies. They lead to courses of action and patterns of behavior that have a real impact on the living world, its environment, its social systems, and its stability. And so when we are talking about human development built upon scientific exploration and discoveries, a certain way of utilizing earthly resources, and a discussion of problems confronting human society, we are saying that a particular state of mind leads to a congruent set of outcomes. As regards the state of mind of the Muslim who has pledged and betrothed himself to Allah (ﷻ), it leads to peace within and public peace (security) in society, because it is absent from the greed and excessive desire to possess more and to generate exponential profits. As for the schizophrenic state of mind that is unresponsive

to exhortations from Allah (ﷻ), it leads to a schizophrenic society beset with the seven deadly sins: lust, gluttony, greed, apathy (or sloth), anger (or wrath), envy, and pride. And the characteristics of such a schizophrenic society are extremes of mania and depression, wild binges of sensual self-gratification, and inflated sense of self-importance, insecurity, anxiety, instability, paranoia, and fear. Such a society has set itself up for its own imminent self-destruction. Accordingly, from the Bible, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”²¹⁷

Suffice it here to say, there are many public figures who have been trained and coached to be convincing as they present their case and provide their “statistics,” peppering their appeals, at times, with scripture. And there are multitudes of people who have been infected by the vested interests of big money and big talk, which wrap themselves up with Yahūdī, Christian, and “Muslim” scripture. But the fact of the matter is that such public figures are public enemy number one, for if they were to prevail they would go about the earth wreaking havoc, devitalizing tilth, and killing progeny, “...and Allah does not love corruption.” Real and observable policies spin off from such public advocates of “change.” The most effective weapon in their arsenal, and what makes their cause(s) alluring, is *word manipulation*. The public con men call it population control, presented as a means of optimizing human numbers to match limited and fading resources; but for whoever can cut through the mind and word games, he will know they are talking depopulation. He will know that the use of euphemisms like “mercy killing,” abortion, and collateral damage for killing the unborn, the aged, and the innocent are part of a broader policy to sequester resources for those whose greed cannot be tamed.

“Managing” the world food supply is part and parcel of the world depopulation program. Genetic modification and hybridization of plants and seeds may have their benefits, but coupled with a capitalistic mindset for control and profits, they have generated the seed of a single harvest. Allah’s (ﷻ) produce is self-regenerating, allowing its users to be self-sufficient; but those who plant the single-harvest seed can only have one yield and are forced to buy it

from the genetic manufacturer for all subsequent harvests, thereby becoming dependent on him to have food to eat. And to convince the would-be grower to commit to this new seed, its high yield and disease resistant properties are talked up, Madison Avenue style. This is the ruination of agricultural produce, especially if the genetic code of Allah's (ﷻ) self-regenerating produce is only accessible to a handful of people on earth. And it leads to worldwide discordance. Why are farmers in the American Midwest burning their crops when there are people dying of hunger in the global east? Why is there an abundance of food consumption in the northern hemisphere where industrial rather than agricultural production is high, while there is a scarcity of food intake in the southern hemisphere where agricultural rather than industrial production is high?

When an informed Muslim identifies this discrepancy and turns to the public figure who is the chief executive of such a status quo, telling him, **“Be conscious of Allah’s [power],”** he is confronted with a personality that is not prone to listen to sound advice on saving lives and feeding the world’s poor. At this point the man with impressive words and destructive deeds is swamped by pride and prejudice. He is more interested with preserving the economic powers that have set the policies of life and produce destruction into motion. This public figure of sweet words and sour works cannot check his ego and restrain his drive, **“...wherefore hell will be his allotted portion — and how vile a resting-place!”**

An important thing to remember here is the level of the Muslim’s understanding and consciousness of these *āyāt*. The character that has impressive things to say should be understood as he who has the power and the access to institutional levers to impose policies that will force a deliberately managed, declining population to compete for an intentional shortage of food on the market. In today’s world many of these policies are tucked into the “fiscal responsibility” demands of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the International Development Association, all of whom are sponsored by massive corporate interests and capitalist greed.²¹⁸ If telling Muslims to have *taqwá* does not cause them to see these sweet-talkers and sustenance stalkers in the words of this

āyah, then there is a rift between Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) on one side and the Islamic *da'wah* on the other.

Then the *āyāt* move on to an antidotal character type: those who have given themselves to Allah (ﷻ),

But there is [also] a kind of person who would willingly exchange his own self for Allah's gratification: and Allah is most kindhearted toward His attendants (2:207).

At this chronic juncture when the bells toll obstreperously for those who make vivid impressions on the public, there is that “small guy” who stands in opposition to plundering policies, sterilization campaigns, and the fancy face-lifts given to the ugly countenance of war. He opposes by making a strong public statement, “**Ittaqillāh: Fear the oncoming power of Allah.**” He is the type who would willingly exchange his own self for the fondness of Allah (ﷻ). He knows he is with Allah (ﷻ) because his understanding and communication of scripture is not skewed, slanted, or swerved by corporate and capital interest. Rather, he is focused, founded, and fixated on Allah (ﷻ). If Allah (ﷻ) says the resources of the earth are plentiful He knows they are. If He says there is life in the womb, he is certain there is life in the womb (*ḥayāt al-rahm* in the Prophet's (ﷺ) words). If Allah (ﷻ) is enumerating the vices and the economic sins of chief executives and commanders-in-chief, he is 100% sure of what Allah (ﷻ) is telling him. This “small guy” not only knows he is with Allah (ﷻ), he also feels he is with Allah (ﷻ). His is a life of the way Allah (ﷻ) wanted humans to be. By virtue of being cited in this *āyah*, this personality is a permanent feature of every wayward society; or in other words, he is a permanent thorn in the sides of those who deliberately mislead. If those of nice words and vile works are present, then so is this one who is there to correct them. That is why they tremble when the “small guy” speaks up; they know he has seen them for what they are and they know he has a counter-program. That is why they designate unlimited budgets and an army of foot soldiers to demonize him as a fundamentalist, terrorist, extremist, and warmonger.

This type of person who would willingly exchange himself for the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) is the first unit in an Islamic human social order. He breaks from the rhetoric of politicians and the “statistics” of the status quo to become the only real alternative that searching souls have. He and his likes put together become Allah’s (ﷻ) divine society on earth where the norm is common care, reciprocal responsibility, complementary love, and interactive cooperation. This is not a description of some utopia but of a model that is probable when man has Allah (ﷻ) on his side. This was demonstrated during the time of Allah’s (ﷻ) concluding Prophet (ﷺ) in the standards and the values that prevailed, and throughout Islamic social history, to differing degrees. Even in its worst days, the society running on Islamic social principles was better than any other *jāhili* society then and now. In this Islamic society of the “small guy” who is with Allah (ﷻ) — as opposed to *jāhili* societies and *ṭāghūtī* governments who are beholden to “big bucks” and chosen races — the attention and aid of the Muslim citizens supersedes ethnocentric notions and racial unity. This transnational, supra-ethnic, and post-racial transformation can only come about when Allah’s (ﷻ) and His Prophet’s (ﷺ) words penetrate the mind and settle in the heart, **“All *mu’mins* are but fellow brothers” (49:10),**

*The equivalent of mu’mins’ compassion, grace, and affection is the like of an organic structure: if one organ complains the whole structure responds and rejoins.*²¹⁹

Features of this close-knit human society, which are not features of other material and fast-paced *jāhili* societies, include

But when you are greeted with a greeting [of peace], answer with even a better greeting, or [at least] return it (4:86).

O you who are securely committed to Allah! Do not enter houses other than your own unless you have obtained permission and greeted their residents. This

is, [if done], for your own good, so that you might bear [your mutual rights] in mind (24:27).

And do not turn your cheek away from people in [false] pride, and do not walk vainglorious on earth: for, behold, Allah does not love anyone who, out of self-conceit, acts in a boastful manner (31:18).

But [since] good and evil cannot be equal, repel you [evil] with something that is better, and lo! he between whom and yourself was enmity [may then become] as though he had [always] been close [to you], a true friend! (41:34).

The social values and the social character of this scriptural society on earth comes from tuning in to Allah (ﷻ) when He says,

O you who are securely committed to Allah! No folk shall deride [other] folk; it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves. And no women shall deride other women; it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves. And neither shall you defame one another nor insult one another by [opprobrious] epithets; evil is all imputation of iniquity after having committed to Allah. And they who [become guilty thereof and] do not repent — it is they, they who are offenders! (49:11).

Political corruption set in at the highest level of the Islamic government in the first few generations after the Prophet (ﷺ), and kings and monarchs began to replace the *khilāfah al-rāshidah*, but the moral standards of the average Qur'anic citizens remained very impressive. At the grassroots level the social integrity of a society with high moral standards was still intact and much in tune with such Qur'anic and prophetic instructions as

O you who are securely committed to Allah! Avoid much mistrust [about one another], for behold, some of [such] mistrust is [in itself] a sin; and do not spy upon one another, and neither allow yourselves to speak ill of one another behind your backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would loathe it! And be conscious of Allah's [power presence]. Verily, Allah is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace! (49:12).

O you who are securely committed to Allah! If any person of degenerate character comes to you with a [slanderous] subject matter, use your discernment, lest you hurt people unwittingly and afterwards be filled with remorse for what you have done (49:6),

and, "A Muslim to another Muslim is thoroughly sanctified: his bloodline, his wealth, and his womenfolk."²²⁰

The level of collective *taqwá* required to keep a society immune from the impact of those with sweet words and bitter intentions has to be maintained at a high level. Even Muslims cannot afford to be "lulled to sleep" by the obvious safety, security, and stability of a society running on Islamic norms and principles. Thus, when grassroots Muslims are careful not to violate Islamic social norms, it does not mean they are not careless in checking political violation. In times past, just because hither-and-yore Muslims kept their Islamic social identity and values alive did not mean that the political officials in the Muslim state were keeping their faith in as far as Islamic governance was concerned. The sweet-talkers who secretly covet power, profits, and privilege live in the realm of politics and make their power play in the political arena. This is where the "small guy" has to be politically mature, politically aware, politically active, and politically courageous enough to put his life on the line when people of influence attempt to grab power. And for the "small guy" to enjoy security at the grassroots level, he must be part of an *ummaḥ* whose

coordinated and concentrated impact operates to hold potential political deviation in check.

The double vision that Muslims, Shī'īs and Sunnīs alike, have of themselves has to be adjusted. On one hand there are those Muslims — mostly Shī'īs — who view the initial post-prophetic years and subsequent Muslim generations with skepticism; and in some cases they exhibit a mental rejection of a clear grassroots quality, since unsurpassed by any other society. Islamic society, not polity, was indeed unique, forward looking, and a moral gem in human history. But on the other hand there are those Muslims — mostly Sunnīs — who tend to conflate the Islamic administrations of the initial post-prophetic years with the subsequent hereditary dynasties and regimes. They view all of these with trust and faith, and in some cases they ardently identify with some of the monarchs, kings, amirs, and sultans, holding them in high esteem.

Peace and Security Come From Integrating with Allah (ﷻ)

The *āyah* that follows this illustration of two personality profiles is Allah's (ﷻ) familiar call to the committed Muslims to enter into a peaceful relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Henceforth no one should be sidetracked by Satan, especially after receiving the evidence and the facts from Allah (ﷻ),

O you who are firmly committed to Allah! Enter into a state of peacefulness [with Allah], and follow not Satan's footsteps, for verily he is your open foe. And if you should stumble after all evidence of the truth has come to you, then know that indeed Allah is Illustrious, Wise (2:208–209).

This is a call to all affirming Muslims to embark on a course of collective public and general security. The pioneers of the Ummah are summoned to enter into an atmosphere free of anxiety and fear, even if the loud voices of popular propaganda instruments accuse

them of a penchant and enchantment for violence. This means that the exemplary Islamic social order in Madinah was reconciled to Allah's (ﷻ) will, not as isolated individuals or alienated citizens or passive residents, nor as an uncertain minority, but as a total Islamic social reality.

Indirectly, this *āyah* suggests that some individuals at that time had doubts about where Islam was taking them. It should be expected that, when there are thousands of Muslims in a maturing Islamic social order, a few individuals are not wholly reconciled to developments taking place around them. Remember, in Madinah at that time, pressure was increasing on the nascent Islamic state from all directions. The military threat was real and menacing. The Yahūdī factions inside Madinah were suspect and scheming, while the emerging Islamic society in Madinah was imperfect and vulnerable. And so the Qur'an had to remind these formative Muslims, taking them under its wing, **“Admit yourselves into a state of safety and sanctuary [provided by Allah] and do not follow in Satan’s footsteps...”**

One of the indications of Satan’s leverage here is the uncertainty and ambivalence that erodes the collective confidence of the nascent Islamic order. The leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ) was central to this process as he was initiating every forward step with Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance. What has to be stressed is that Allah’s (ﷻ) address is not to individuals; it was, and is, to the whole Muslim society. This undertaking of a secure and confident relationship with Allah (ﷻ) is essential to the Islamic social system, that is, the structured pattern of social relationships that together have a systemic character. It was because of this systemic character that Makkah and its ruling class could not tolerate or coexist with Islam. This is why all world-based establishments — capitalist, feudalist, socialist, and the rest — cannot accept the Islamic movement progressing beyond verbal *da‘wah* to becoming a well-defined and distinct social order that is both independent and self-confident.

A society has a social system inasmuch as change in some aspects of society will bring change in other parts. Different types

of social systems have prevailed in various periods of history. Sociologists have also distinguished *traditional* from *modern* social systems, but there is considerable debate over the exact meaning of these two terms. The Islamic social system, however, is characterized by its peaceful and secure relationship with Allah (ﷻ). And once again, it cannot be overemphasized that this is a social, not only an individual, relationship with Allah (ﷻ). If Muslims go to war they go as a society, and this Islamic society maintains its peaceful relationship with Allah (ﷻ) even in the forays and ravages of warfare. This collective confidence in Allah (ﷻ), residing not only in an individual's heart but also in the dynamic pulse of mainstream society, knows that Allah's (ﷻ) power overrides all other competing worldly powers even if they presumptuously call themselves the great powers or "superpowers." When an Islamic bloc knows this, it has nothing to fear. But Muslims have everything to fear when this knowledge is fragmented and confined to scattered, isolated individuals.

In an Islamic social environment the popular consensus is that Allah (ﷻ) is wise and fair. His potential and power are guarantees against systemic and endemic *zulm* (maltreatment and abuse). Allah's (ﷻ) quality of being widely obeyed and revered repels the preponderance of immorality and sin. Allah's (ﷻ) justice as it prevails at the core of social conscience is enough to warrant fair individual behavior and responsible interpersonal relations. At this level society *transacts* with Allah (ﷻ), and so has nothing to fear except Allah (ﷻ). The lesser icons that are currently in possession of man (such as Hollywood stars, superathletes, divas, corporate icons, and "rock-star" CEOs) will lose their glamor and man will once again find his forsaken relationship with Allah (ﷻ) who has been "eclipsed" by man-made idols. The Western idols are the equivalents of the *jāhili* idols of yore. People adore, admire and feel a deep affection for them to an extent that should be reserved only for Allah (ﷻ). This idolatry must be destroyed as that of Makkah was destroyed.

A state of peace with Allah (ﷻ) requires man to avoid Satan's pace and stride, a pace and stride that are set nowadays pri-

marily by the film industry. Despite all the social tension and personal waywardness that are generated by the devil's advocates from Hollywood to Capitol Hill, an attendee of Allah (ﷻ) knows very well how close, loving, and caring Allah (ﷻ) is. He is willing to forgive blunders and mistakes if man approaches Him with all his heart: if man is weak He will bless him and if he is burdened with sin He will relieve him. This is the relationship of *silm* (peace) with Allah (ﷻ).

Knowing Allah (ﷻ) as He presents Himself to man through the understanding of His attributes — abstractions belonging to His unique Self — eventually brings man into close proximity with Him. The more he knows and understands about Him, through the Qur'an and other sources, the more he settles into a position of comfort with Him. And with this positioning of human life in its progression toward Allah (ﷻ) man feels secure, blessed, proud, and in an unparalleled state of calm.

There is peace in the appropriate and harmonious relationship between Allah (ﷻ), the Superior, and man, the inferior, or between the Sustainer and the sustained. When man realizes that there should be a sound relationship between Creator and creation he feels at ease. Likewise, there is a balanced and equitable relationship between man and the world around him. It is Allah (ﷻ) who has measured and created the universe in a way that leaves no room for chance or carelessness. Everything in the observable realm is proportionate and well balanced. Man was not created and thrown into a well-organized existence to follow only his appetites. The provision of water, air, and food was made available to help man live responsibly. From the farthest our telescopes can take us to the nearest our microscopes can bring us, the observable world seems to be thoughtfully measured to support human life. Besides all of this, Allah (ﷻ) has honored human life. He appointed man His beneficiary on earth. Allah (ﷻ) cares for man so much that He has favored him with His words of wisdom, statements of certainty, and given facts.

In light of this, reality, existence, and life are friendly to man. There is no need to fear the oceans of "unknown" areas, or the

galaxies that are still beyond human knowledge. Wherever man is in time and space, the spirit that permeates existence and the universe is a friendly and agreeable one. The underlying fact is that everything and everyone in one sense or another is a creature and subject of Allah (ﷻ). Man has to assimilate into this relationship and reality of existential wholeness under the care and protection of Allah (ﷻ).

That is why Islam even teaches man to have a relationship with plants; if a Muslim waters a plant he is rewarded by Allah (ﷻ). When he helps the plant grow and removes harm from its soil he is rewarded and he feels good about it. This is not only an honorable belief-system, it is also a beautiful one because it soothes man's conscience and heart. In this scheme of things a Muslim embraces everything around him and, conversely, whether he is conscious of it or not, everything around embraces him. A Muslim, in this manner, becomes the conscious and the rational extension of the quiescent world to which he belongs, with which he feels, and in which he dwells; this same world becomes his extension. This is the atmosphere of peaceful existence, peaceful coexistence, and peaceful beingness.

Along with this comes the Muslim's feeling of belonging to the *ākhirah* (the final life, or the hereafter) as well. A firm belief in the *ākhirah* frees the Muslim of expecting immediate results in this life. It does not free him from working to achieve results eventually. When a Muslim's soul and mind extend beyond human life to all forms of life and creation around, that in itself is an extension of his life. But when a Muslim's soul and mind also extend beyond this life to the next, then this becomes the best therapy that anyone can ask for.

The Islamic work ethic (*wa 'amilū al-ṣāliḥāt*) is not compromised by "favorable outcomes." It is based on preparation, commitment, and unrestrained effort. No neurosis develops just because things did not go "the way I wanted them to go." High worldly expectations often cause disappointment or frustration, or even drive people to suicide. Why? "Because things have to happen here and now, on my watch, or else there is no use in doing whatever is

being done!” A connected Muslim — connected to Allah (ﷻ), of course — knows that final accountability is not to be expected in this world, and the final compensation also is never in this world. “At the end of the day” does not refer to the lapsing of one earthly day; rather, it means a time when a lifetime of worldly deeds will receive their reward. At that time there will be total and absolute justice from Allah (ﷻ). In this respect no Muslim regrets doing good or being involved in jihad in this world when the worldly results seem to be lacking because the payment is postponed to the Day of Accountability. If a Muslim feels that he is not compensated enough in this world he knows that he will be compensated more than enough in the next. Allah’s (ﷻ) scale will tip in his favor for all that he has done in this life. The worldly distribution may seem unfair at times, but rest assured Allah’s (ﷻ) distribution of things on that Day of Certainty will be fair and equitable; justice will be done.

The peace that comes with a commitment to the *ākhirah* while working in the *dunyā* (earthly life) precludes this “dog eat dog” race to riches and wealth at the expense of morals, principles, and values. A Muslim whose heart is anchored in the *ākhirah* while his hands and feet are in the *dunyā* knows well that he is approaching, day by day, the reward Allah (ﷻ) has set aside for him, which must be earned in this world. This certainty of the *ākhirah* offsets the cut-throat materialistic competition, characterized by the unending pursuit of the “American way,” that rages in capitalist societies. A person does not “make it” in life if he burns his nerves, atrophies his muscles, and depletes his health for a bank account that will dissolve a few years after his death. A person “makes it” when he invests his time working to please Allah (ﷻ). The former is contrary to real peace, the latter is conducive to peace.

“O you who are securely committed! Enter into a state of public security wholly and do not follow the steps of Satan.” This *āyah* shows by implication that there are two directions to take: one of them is a movement in the direction of peace and public security; the other one is in lockstep with Satan, contrary to peace and security. And the *āyah* also speaks to the Muslim Ummah. It poses

a difficult question: is it possible for an individual Muslim to enter a realm of peace and security? More to the point, can there be a realm of peace and security for individual Muslims while other Muslims are denied it? The obvious answer is that all Muslims are instructed to move into the domain of peace and security; the meaning of *security* here is public security. The inference is clear: personal or private security is illusive and temporary. Real, lasting security originates with and is sustained by the involvement of all the committed Muslims.

How easily the key word *kāffatan* (conjointly and collectively) is overlooked. By choosing to ignore one word in the Qur'an, the Muslims have come across a thousand problems related to the lack of peace and security all over the world. For example, when *Euro-kufr* came for the Ottoman state, other Muslims looked the other way because they did not identify with the "Ottomans." As the powers of *Euro-kufr*, bit by bit and piece by piece, were pirating this and that Muslim land in the name of colonialism and imperialism, "other" Muslims stood aside because they were not the immediate victims. And so, in quick succession, Palestine, Kashmir, and other lands were lost because the "rest" of the Muslims were not behaving as the Qur'an instructs them to behave: *kāffatan*.

One of the indicators of an anxiety-ridden society running after an elusive peace is the discordant, and often turbulent, relationship between human nature and its expression in the two genders. Islamic neighborhoods, communities, and societies — let us admit it — were relatively free of the spell of sex, the preponderance of pornography, and the madhouse of activities associated with making love. Islamic byways and highways were free of prowling eyes and stalking characters. Islamic societies, even with political corruption seeping into the highest official positions of the Islamic Ummah, never experienced the flesh fetish and erotic insanity prevalent nowadays in the most "civilized" nations on earth. Islamic society — and let all Muslims and decent human beings be proud of it — had taken into the heart of its soul and the core of its community Allah's (ﷻ) words,

Verily, for those who like a proliferation of immorality among those who are committed to Allah, grievous suffering awaits them in this world and in the life to come, for Allah knows [the full truth], whereas you know [it] not (24:19).

Tell men who are committed to Allah to deflect their vision and to husband their genital ingress; this will be most conducive to their innocence — [and], indeed, Allah is aware of all that they do. And tell women who are committed to Allah to deflect their vision and to husband their genital ingress, and to not show off their attractiveness [in public] beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof; hence, let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms. And let them not display [more of] their attractiveness to any but their husbands, or their fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their womenfolk, or those who are in their custody, or such male attendants as are beyond all sexual desire, or children who are as yet unaware of women's nakedness; and let them not stamp their legs [in walking] so as to draw attention to their hidden charms. And [always], O you who are [confidently] committed to Allah — all of you — turn to Allah in repentance, so that you might be successful (24:30–31).

The “small guy” Muslim who may not have been able to check political deviation as it crept into the highest office of the Islamic government was, nevertheless, successful in establishing a society that did not lose sight of how Allah (ﷻ) spoke to the Prophet's (ﷺ) wives and the high moral standard set for them by Qur'anic words,

O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any of the [other] women, provided that you remain [truly] conscious of Allah. Hence, be not over-soft in your speech, lest any whose heart is diseased should be moved to desire [you], but, withal, speak in a kindly way. And abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of *jāhiliyah*; and establish *ṣalāh* [as a social standard], and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto Allah and His Apostle, for Allah only wants to remove from you all that might be odious, O you members of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you to utmost purity (33:32–33).

Compare these moral standards that were the norm in Islamic society to the contemporary aftermath of the sexual revolution in the West, and with Hollywood as a catalyst, in almost all other parts of the world. The Western sexual revolution has its roots in the romantic movement, which itself was a rebellion against the repressed attitudes of the bourgeoisie resulting in the so-called “pleasure wars” — the long-running disputes in which the bohemian sensualists were flouting middle-class conventions.

In the 1960s and 1970s, nudity was deemed revolutionary and “pop” stars were deemed radical when they sang anthems to sex, drugs, and rock 'n' role. To get a first hand glimpse of these new *jāhili* codes, go down to your local park in the summertime. You will see women jogging or running in sports bras and skintight spandex pants. Flush Hollywood out of your mind for a moment and imagine looking at women running around in their underwear in public. Then remember that the “foremothers” of this new trend were in the recent past grandparents and great grandparents who were appalled by Sodom and Gomorrah in their Sunday sermons and classes. But look at the bra joggers more closely. One does not see wanton hedonism on their faces; any erotic impact of their near nudity is counteracted by their grim expressions of determination. They are working out, and while doing so, they never smile. On the

contrary, some of them seem to be suffering. These near-naked young women are self-discipline personified — no pain, no gain — and the reason they are practically naked, they will tell you, is that this sort of clothing is most practical, most useful for strenuous exercise. What you see at the park is near nudity, but somehow it is nudity in the service of achievement.

In the once prevalent Islamic social order, husband and wife relations were iron-clad: both could trust and have faith in the other. Womenfolk were a precious and highly guarded gem of Islamic society. The hearts and the nerves of the members of this society were calm and comforted. Masculine eyes were not roaming the streets and centers of society looking for female flesh; eye contact was not the first opening move to sin and adultery. In the first centuries of Islamic civilization, family and social relations were pure, honorable, and secure. For those unable to participate in the work force, this society also offered its members gainful opportunities and welfare. Thus, marriage and family life were affordable and accessible to all.

A neighborhood or district would be held accountable if a hungry person from that district were to perish of hunger. Some *faqīhs* would see to it that such a neighborhood would be formally charged and fined for such an offence. Muslims have been the gatekeepers of a moral social order. No one should be able to convince any Muslim that political corruption, which actually occurred in the dynasties that ruled the Ummah, had emptied the Islamic social order of its moral quality, character, and component. And on the other hand, acknowledging this moral feature of Islamic societies should never blind any Muslim to the corruption and depravity that had become a common feature of the ruling dynasties beginning with the Umayyads. Human nature in its social manifestation reached its zenith during the years of Islamic civilization.

In point of fact, there is no comparison between the Islamic social standard, as exhibited in the moral stability of its societies for the better part of 1,300 years, and a Western civilization in crisis. In the 20th-century West, for reasons that have sometimes been psychological and sometimes philosophical, the idea that there is such

a thing as human nature has come to sound highly improbable and quite unserviceable. Perhaps the three most influential proponents of this tradition of doubt were Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud.

Although there are many angles to Nietzsche's thought, perhaps what made him the godfather of the West's morally collapsing world was his contrast between master and slave moralities. It was the latter that he especially disliked, and he believed that the Christian ethic was responsible for it. He sought to overturn this Christian view and replace it by a vision of a humanistic and unbelieving world in which what had widely been taken as normative, morally speaking, would all perish.

The irony in the cases of both Freud and Marx is that while their thought has been highly destructive of moral life in this past century, they both retained a sense of the indubitable correctness of their own views. Marx dismissed morality as something that the socially powerful had contrived in order to keep the weak and oppressed in their place, but no one who has read his dissertations can miss the sense of moral outrage in which his own social judgments are delivered.

And although Freud allowed that morality was necessary, he showed no further interest in the idea. His real focus centered on the development of "conscience," which he characterized as the superego — something that developed early on, in the boy's case, as the barrier against his lust for his mother and his jealous anger of his father. There is apparently not a shred of evidence to support such a theory, but it has been immensely "successful" in giving people a reason to forsake what is moral on the supposition that self-restraint is not good for one's psychological health. How far can the unscriptural mind go?

When the dignity of genders, the mutual and love-based cooperation of classes, and the virtual elimination of racial discrimination in the Islamic civilization is compared with the gender bias, class discrimination, and racist polarizations of Western civilization, Allah's (ﷻ) words to humanity are all the more appreciable,

O You who are firmly committed to Allah! Enter into a state of peacefulness with Allah, and follow not Satan's footsteps, for, certainly, he is your open foe. And if you should stumble after all evidence of the truth has come to you, then know that, indeed, Allah is Awe-Inspiring, Wise (2:208–209).

This state of peace with Allah (ﷻ) will always elude the materialistic and carnal members of Western civilization as long as they insist on denying Allah (ﷻ), that is, as long as *kufr* is part of their behavioral and ideological paradigm.

Satan and the Fear of Drifting into Poverty

At this point we should take a more enlightened approach to this advice from Allah (ﷻ), “**And follow not in Satan’s footsteps...**” According to what has become an extremely vague Western feel for him, Satan, or the Devil, is conceived as the arch opponent of God, the source of all evil in the world, and the one tempting humanity to sin. Within the Judeo-Christian theological tradition, however, there are significant departures from this view. For instance, in the Hebrew Bible, the term *satan* is not normally used as a proper name; instead it refers to a member of the heavenly court who functions to accuse people before God. He is God’s agent, not God’s opponent. Only in 1 Chronicles, 21:1 does the word *satan* become the name of an individual opposing God, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”²²¹

Through a complex process of myth-making, the satanic figure was linked to various historical and mythical opponents of God until in the developing apocalyptic tradition of sectarian Judaism, God was thought to have one great cosmic opponent: Satan or the Devil. And so Satan came to be regarded as the one who directed the evil deed’s of Israel’s oppressors as well as those of fellow Jews against the elect community. Because Satan was thought to have been a member of the heavenly court originally, he provided the model of the intimate enemy for sectarian Jews.

Christianity took over the dualistic conception of a cosmic struggle between God and the Devil from apocalyptic Judaism. To the original Jewish version, “Christians” of the Church added the myth of the resurrected and ascended “Christ” who would lead the eschatological victory of God over Satan and his human and heavenly followers.²²² As in sectarian Judaism, those opposing the followers of Christ were viewed as servants of Satan²²³ or children of the Devil.²²⁴ This negative labeling reinforced the identity of the Christians as the people of God, accounted for opposition to them, and distanced them from the corrupting influence of outsiders, especially their religious competitors. The New Testament writings also make clear that Satan played a role in the folk religion of Jesus (☩) and his followers. The Devil, as the prince of demons, was thought to be responsible for human illness and disability.²²⁵ Thus, by exorcizing demons, Jesus (☩) and his followers were considered to have engaged in overpowering the Devil. At the level of popular “Christianity,” the Devil and his demonic agents were thought to be responsible for all evil in human experience. Entry into the Church included ritual exorcism, making it the one part of society free from the power of the Devil. Later on in European Church history, when all but the Jews had become “Christians” in an otherwise “Christian” Europe, emerged the idea of the witch — someone who had apparently made a pact with the Devil against Christ, rendering him totally evil .

In the 12th century CE when the Church began to confront potential rivals, the idea that heretics worshipped the Devil began to manifest. This vilification of religious competitors by the Church was clearly intended to marginalize potential power rivals within society and justify their destruction. Around this period the Inquisitions began to direct their attention against the ancient practice of magic and witchcraft saying that witches, who were said to worship Satan and engage in sexual orgies with him, were part of an organized attack on “Christian” society.²²⁶

In the contemporary Western world, from where Hollywood and academia project their beliefs and ideas, two distinct trends have emerged. On the one hand, since the European Enlightenment

and its ideologically atheistic bias, the very concept of the Devil as a personal evil force has become suspect for many in Western civilization. For this reason the Devil plays only a minor role in much contemporary “Christian” theology. Where the term *devil* does occur it has largely been demythologized, becoming a metaphor for the malevolent forces of destruction and evil emanating from human volition, or resulting from social interaction and the structures created by human beings. For many Western theological thinkers the idea of a personal devil has become repugnant because it threatens to absolve humanity of its personal and corporate responsibility for the existence of evil.

On the other hand, for many, the Devil remains a formidable spiritual foe seeking to lure people to their destruction through sin. “Christian” fundamentalists with their pre-scientific worldview, often go further, saying that contemporary society is under increasing assault from Satan. They contend that Satanism, the active pursuit of evil by those worshipping the Devil, is on the increase through organized Satanic cults. Since 1980, some law enforcement workers in the United States have attempted to explain a variety of crimes in terms of Satanic activity. Among a significant group of contemporary “Christians,” the Devil clearly remains part of contemporary Western folklore, providing a popular explanation for evil and deviancy from societal norms.

While the Devil’s role in serious theological reflection has waned in the modern world, Satan remains a powerful force for evil in the mind of popular Christianity. Unfortunately, by attributing ultimate responsibility for evil to a “supernatural” force, and by understanding evil only in moralistic terms and as deviancy from societal norms, many “Fundamentalist Christians” appear to deny any personal culpability for the fundamental evils of modern society. And thus they rationalize not engaging in the creation of a world where the root causes of evil such as racism, unequal distribution of resources, and exploitation are destroyed.

Discussions between Jews and Christians about the nature of Satan and whether or not he has any influence on man’s behavior go back a long way, and they continue to this day. Muslims, happi-

ly, were not in the past, and are not now major contributors to these deep-seated religious and mental exchanges between Christians and Jews. But there are enough complexed and frustrated Muslims out there who feel excluded from the “power club” of Christian imperialism and Jewish Zionism; and so they rationalize their membership into this club by suggesting that, since Islam is also an Abrahamic “religion,” America has a “Judeo-Christian-Islamic” heritage. If they say this, then they must also say that the State of Israel and Saudi Arabia both have a “Judeo-Christian-Islamic” heritage because of the way they emerged as state entities. This of course is folly, but it serves to highlight how ignorant these anglophilic Muslims are not only of Allah’s (ﷻ) words in the Qur’an, but also of these ancient and time-tested Jewish-Christian linkages, which preclude the inclusion of any Islamic presence in their racist and dogmatically anti-god worldview.

Contrast the above Judeo-Christian ambivalence and restrictions about the Devil or Satan with the Qur’anic lucidity about the accursed one, Satan (Shayṭān),

Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and bids you to be petty in giving or spending... (2:265).

It is but Satan who instils [into you] fear of his allies: so fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [truly] Covenant bearers (3:175).

But all who take Satan rather than Allah for their overlord do indeed, most clearly, lose all; he [Satan] holds out promises to them, and fills them with vain desires, yet whatever Satan promises them is but meant to delude the mind (4:119–120).

...intoxicants, gambling, idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan’s doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a prosperous state! (5:90).

Yet when the misfortune decreed by Us befell them, they did not humble themselves, but rather their hearts grew hard, for Satan had made all their doings seem appealing to them (6:43).

Thereupon Satan intimated unto the two [Adam and Eve] with a view to making them conscious of their nakedness, of which [hitherto] they had been unaware... (7:20).

And if it should happen that a prompting from Satan stirs you up [to blind anger], seek safety with Allah... (7:200).

Verily, they who are vigilant of Allah bethink themselves [of Him] whenever any dark suggestion from Satan taps them – whereupon, lo! they begin to see [things] clearly... (7:201).

[Jacob] replied, “O my dear son! Do not relate your dream to your brothers lest [out of envy] they devise an evil scheme against you: verily, Satan is man’s open foe!” (12:5).

And when everything will have been decided, Satan will say, “Behold, Allah promised you something that was bound to come true! I, too, held out [all manner of] promises to you — but I deceived you. Yet I had no power at all over you; I but called you, and you responded to me. Hence, do not blame me, but blame yourselves (14:22).

O my father! Do not conform unto Satan, for, verily, Satan is recalcitrant to the Most Gracious (19:44).

Indeed, he led me astray from the cognizance [of Allah] after it had come to me! For [thus it is:] Satan is ever a betrayer of man (25:29).

And [one day] he [Mūsá] entered the city at a time when [most of] its people were resting [in their houses], unaware of what was going on [in the streets]; and there he encountered two men fighting with one another — one of his own people, and the other of his enemies. And the one who belonged to his own people cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies, whereupon Mūsá struck him down with his fist, and [thus] brought about his end. [But then] he said [to himself], “This is of Satan’s doing! Certainly, he is an open foe, leading [man] astray!” (28:15).

Verily, those who turn their backs [on this message] after guidance has been vouchsafed to them, [do it because] Satan has embellished their fancies and filled them with false hopes (47:25).

[All other kinds of] secret confabulations are but of Satan’s doing, so that he might cause grief to those who commit themselves [to Allah]; yet he cannot harm them in the least... (58:10).

Satan has gained mastery over them, and has caused them to remain oblivious of the remembrance of Allah. Such as these are Satan’s partisans; oh, indeed, it is they, the partisans of Satan, who will truly be the losers (58:19).

...the like of [what happens] when Satan says to man, “Deny the truth!” But as soon as man has denied the truth, [Satan] says, “Behold, I am not responsible for you; behold, I fear Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds!” (59:16).

Shayṭān (Satan) has been mentioned 68 times in the Qur’an (the word *shayṭānan* (demon) has been mentioned twice, and the

word *shayāṭīn* (devils) is mentioned 17 times). With the Qur'an mentioning the accursed Satan nearly 100 times, suffice it here for the reader to take a look at the *āyāt* above and develop a better understanding of how this destructive and evil being works. Some characteristics of Shayṭān that can be ascertained include,

- He threatens man with the likelihood of poverty and he presses him to withhold spending and disbursal of his wealth and possessions.
- He instils fear into the hearts of those who identify with him.
- He holds out promises and fills his followers with vain desires.
- He deludes the minds of his adherents.
- Intoxicants, addiction, gambling, attachment to superstition, and false deities are the results of Satan's evil insinuations and doings.
- Satan tempts males and females into illicit relationships by intimation and emotional incitement.
- Satan rationalizes evil and gives it the spin of an applauded achievement.
- He stirs up blind anger in the psyche of his victim.
- Satan's dark suggestions and hints tap on the feelings and propensities of man.
- Satan's promises and "assurances" are deceiving and deceptive. He does not force anyone to do his will, he rather "convinces" or wins them over to do his will.
- Satan seeks to attach man to himself rather than to bond with Allah (ﷻ).
- Satan's nature is to betray and cheat man.
- Satan's act is concealed in the evil doing of man: oppression, aggression, and tyranny.
- Satan tells man to deny and denounce the truth; and when man complies Satan relieves himself of all responsibility for that human action.

These *āyāt* allude to one area in which Shayṭān is very well entrenched. The first *āyah*, in the long sequence of 17 *āyāt* that elucidate how Shayṭān works, states, "**Satan threatens you with the**

expectation of poverty and bids you to be petty in giving and spending” (2:265). It is generally agreed that attitudes to poverty are a good test of the moral quality of a society. Doing justice to the poor is a cornerstone of the emancipated social order, and a prerequisite for a community and social life free of friction, tension, and even civil conflict. But this moral concern alone is not enough to eradicate or at least diminish poverty as a social phenomenon.

If the assumption is that there is always going to be poverty, the attitude in many affluent societies, and increasingly others who are caught up in the material rat race, is: let it be the share of others and not “us.” So, to stay above the “poverty line” the world centered on “me” has to be tied to a level of income sufficient to enable families to secure the necessities of a healthy life. In other words the way a satanic world order operates is to inspire fear of poverty in a world that is set on securing nourishment, shelter, power, and so forth. These are the things that are necessary to keep the human organism operating reasonably effectively, even if that means keeping other parts of human society from operating in the same way. Poverty means not having the resources to sustain biological life: a family is poor if it cannot afford to eat. And if some increase in prosperity, however little, “trickles down” to the poor, the number of those in poverty declines.

But human beings are more than biological organisms, and poverty is in fact a menace that is at times camouflaged by cultural practices and at other times disguised by a “virtual reality” that distracts the public mind from the increasing distance between the world’s haves and the world’s have-nots. Shayṭān has morphed the primitive fear of poverty into contemporary arguments about each of the world’s 200 societies’ living standards. In the elaborate rationalization of Shayṭān’s reasons to persuade affluent societies to withhold their economic and agricultural help from less fortunate societies, man is “convinced” that the popular expression of need is driven almost wholly by culture, especially in wealthy societies where the residents “need” more in order to “survive.” This conviction is reinforced by an establishment chorus that spares no effort to produce the sort of information that blurs the fact that poverty

is a serious and explosive worldwide problem.

When religion is in the service of the established order and the status quo both of which tend to segregate poor people from the “qualitative elites,” this type of religion (which has its Yahūdī, Christian, and “Muslim” sects) accords poor people a special status within society. That status in the best of conditions qualifies these poverty-stricken people to receive the sympathy and affection of the wealth-holders who are unwilling to part with what Allah (ﷻ) has given them. They are not even willing to consider a system that would make their giving meaningful and productive. Some of these temples and houses of worship can be traced all the way back to Satan, who warns of the eventuality of impoverishment, and who teaches that the condition of the poor is a judgment upon them, and thus a part of the divine ordering of society. A famous 19th-century hymn states,

The rich man in his castle
 The poor man at his gate
 God made them, high or lowly
 And ordered their estate.²²⁷

Another way that the reality of poverty can be obscured is by arguing that it is relative and in a sense inevitable. Thus it is sometimes represented that, although the well-to-do should be concerned about starvation and destitution — “absolute poverty” — in many parts of Africa and Asia, they should note also that many in “prosperous societies” are also poorer in the relative sense, and have poor health, much reduced life expectancy, less choice, and fewer life chances, than other people in their societies.

Objective, subjective, and consensual understandings of poverty all appear to involve value judgments — although some social scientists would deny this — and to involve imperatives, or at least suggestions about how one should respond to poverty. Those on the political left see poverty as inequality, and believe that the only real solution is a more equal distribution of resources. They believe that poverty is disruptive of communities and of

human dignity, and that it demands a radical restructuring of society. Theorists on the political right and those who support an absolute definition of poverty see real deprivation as something to be relieved primarily by charitable action, but they also tend to see wide discrepancies in resource allocation in society as the necessary incentive for economic activity, and even regard poverty as a “spur.” There is thus in Western societies today no value consensus. In a morally fragmented society it is impossible that poverty should be understood uniformly, or that there should be agreement as to how to deal with it.

The biblical texts have a pervasive concern with poverty that can be described as a bias toward the poor. On this basis a strong tradition emerged with three main strands. In the first place, there were frequent prophetic protests against poverty and the oppression of the poor. This tradition persisted even when the Church became wealthy: the popes sounded very much like the Hebrew Prophets (先知) when they denounced luxury, inequality, and the tolerance of poverty alongside affluence. The existence of poverty was seen as an offence against God’s order, and attempts to do justice were understood as contributions to the restoration of the divine ordering and the return to the poor of what is properly theirs. Thus Ambrose, an early Bishop of Milan, famous for introducing the allegorical interpretations of the scriptures into Christian thought, said,

Not from your own do you bestow upon the poor man,
but you make return of what is his. For what has been
given as common for the use of all, you appropriate to
yourself alone. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich...
Therefore you are paying a debt, you are not bestowing
what is not due.²²⁸

Such protests and calls for restitution to the poor have continued at least sporadically up to the present, and are today expressed in the “preferential option for the poor,” which is the central concern of Liberation Theology.²²⁹

In the second place, wherever the Church has had influence in society, there have been efforts to regulate the economy and protect the poor and weak from the oppression of the wealthy and powerful. These attempts found their classical expression in the theories of the just price and the just wage. The assumption was that the market on its own would not, indeed could not, provide justice for the poor and the weak. A just wage must keep the worker and his family with dignity and decency, and enable them to play their role in society. Prices must not be dictated simply by market forces, but must be set at a level where profiteering is impossible and necessities of life are not priced out of the reach of ordinary people. This tradition was well aware of how the self-interest and greed of the powerful could distort market transactions to their advantage; it was realistically suspicious of the “free market.” It tried to protect the poor and weak, but it did not question the social order or the overall structure of economic power.

In the third place, from its earliest days, Christian tradition has nurtured communities that experiment in living by gospel values; such tradition simultaneously protests against the injustices of the world and demonstrates that another way is possible. The Jerusalem church, according to the Book of Acts, was one in which Christians “held all things in common.” St. Paul promoted collections to relieve the want and destitution of poor Christians, claiming that this was a basic expression of Christian fellowship and equality. The monastic communities, communal life sequestered from the world under religious vows, likewise from the beginning held property in common, and the friars embraced “holy property” and shared the lot of the poor as a way of being “close to the Lord.” They saw the poor not simply as a problem to be solved by charity or otherwise, but as those who could bear witness to the love and generosity of God. Indeed, each congregation of God’s people would see itself as a community of sharing and of concern for the poor. This surely is one of the main ethical emphases of the Lord’s Supper, when Christians break and share the bread which is supposed to be “Christ’s body,” given for the life of the world (John, 6:51).

The various experiences of the American “war on poverty” of the 1960s, of the British welfare state, of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and of the workings of the free market, all go to show that a secular ideology has yet to produce a viable solution to the problem of poverty.²³⁰ In this failing context it is easy to become disillusioned or to turn to violence for redress. The Christian and Jewish traditions have failed because on one hand they attempted to deal with poverty strictly on a popular level, without recourse to the instruments of state, and then on the other hand, after centuries they seized the reigns of state to bring poverty under control, but by then they had lost the soul of society. In both ways they proved incapable of dealing with the threat that comes from Shayṭān. Poverty is not really a mal-distribution of resources; this feature of society is in fact rooted in personal greed, an individual attachment to money and what it can buy, and a convenient separation of self from society.

What has been missing from the Judeo-Christian-Western approach to dealing with poverty are the illuminating words of Allah (ﷻ) that penetrate the individual’s heart and conscience, causing him to abhor the accumulation of wealth by a few, which translates into the denial of resources to the many. This effort requires a two-track approach: one is the empowerment of the human conscience to have confidence in the sustenance that Allah (ﷻ) has provided the world’s populations ; the other is the empowerment of society’s government to implement the values of emotional sharing, daily sharing, and vital sharing in a close-knit society, which will eventually make it possible to have a common share of resources, wealth, and possessions. When this is done Shayṭān is defeated in the perceptual experience of man as well as in the societal interactions of this same man; although that defeat cannot be complete and final.

Living in the West-dominated modern world, it does not take much to see a society that is in need of what this Qur’an is offering. Between the Qur’an and the Westerners who are in need of its meanings are two major obstacles: an information system and media that never tire of misrepresenting and defaming Islam; and

nominal and ritualistic Muslims who are convinced that once you are in possession of “Islamic” culture and customs you become a perfect Muslim. America and Europe are rich, but suffer from a poverty of soul and spirit. Despite economic strength, Westerners are experiencing a growing social depression, and what depresses oppresses. There are social studies and exhaustive statistical measurements quantifying the increase of social deficits that reduce individual happiness. Charles Dickens writing about the French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities*, may have just as well been describing the West today,

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was an age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way.²³¹

Precisely the same dichotomy was evident in the modern American society of the late 1990s. On the one hand, food production had increased as food was cheaper than ever. Welfare distributions had declined and joblessness was at a quarter-century low. The dollar, like the stock market, was strong and inflation was low. The national budget showed a surplus. New drugs were prolonging lives and improving the quality of lives. People were driving SUVs, luxury and sports cars, on inexpensive gasoline that was cheaper than a gallon of soda pop.

At the same time, American society was beset by a familiar litany of ills. The divorce rate, the rate of teenage suicides, drug dependency, violent crime, the prison population, the number and proportion of illegitimate children, and the numbers of people living outside family units had all increased manifold.

And then, just 10 short years later, America was slapped with her comeuppance. In addition to all the social problems, her eco-

conomic and military virility dissipated overnight under the weight of unbridled greed and the arrogance associated with being the world's only global superpower. Being overextended in two wars of choice in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with a financial system in free-fall has reversed all the geopolitical gains she made since the Great Depression. The once annual surpluses are now projected to be trillion dollar deficits; unemployment numbers are as high as they have been in 25 years, and the economy is still hemorrhaging jobs at an unprecedented rate, and inflation is beginning to inch back up again. Home foreclosures and business bankruptcies, not to mention insolvent banks are now at an all-time high. Over the next few years, \$9 trillion, borrowed from taxpayers who do not have jobs and whose wages cannot keep up with the rise in prices of essential services and commodities, are projected to "save" the financial sector. Major employment hubs like the auto sector and retail are also near insolvency. Greed, graft, corruption, theft, and hubris have shown that a free market cannot regulate itself; that market forces are too complex for human beings to model, especially in a materialistic "morals-free" zone, without the guiding hand of Allah (ﷻ). America made a deal with the Devil when she did not level with the world about what really happened on 9/11; and so she got levelled. No one can challenge Allah's (ﷻ) power. If you do, you will lose. Imperialist America got what she deserved.

Hence American society is a paradox rooted in the suggestive capacities of Shayṭān; when his scheme of radical individualism and materialism is realized, the good of the community is sacrificed as self-seeking, selfish, self-aggrandizing men and women become affluent and indifferent to the perils of having too much too soon. If only Western society could turn away from its historical prejudices and the interests of the military-industrial complex, and listen with their minds to the words of Allah (ﷻ), **"Enter into a state of peacefulness with Allah, and follow not Satan's footsteps, for indeed, he is your open foe" (2:208).**

At the other end of Western civilization, for 72 years communism in Russia waged a silent war against the human soul. Sometimes screams were heard from torture-chambers in prisons

and in detention centers, but mostly the war was fought with ideas and incessant public propaganda,

Satan has gained mastery over them, and has caused them to remain oblivious of the awareness of Allah. Such as these are Satan’s partisans: indeed, it is they, the partisans of Satan, who will truly be the losers (58:19).

Year after year the silent artillery of communism leveled the inner landscapes of the soul; a more secular way to speak of these things is to say that communism set out to destroy accumulated human experience. It set out, for instance, to eradicate centuries of learning, habits and cultures — to erase “bourgeois culture,” to salt it, and plough it under with lies, demonstrations and propaganda. In the process, it severely damaged the habits of honesty, and trust, self-reliance and fidelity to one’s word.

Even in the best conditions, it is extremely difficult to construct a society that works, that endures, and is self-correcting. The transition from a heart-broken, soul-stolen, and God-forsaken society to a society that is at peace with its Maker is consequently a severely demanding moral task. At the moment, this transition does not seem to be happening. The bosses of the Kremlin turned down a delegation dispatched to them at the most critical time in their history by the late Imam Khomeini.²³² They did not heed his words, choosing instead to react to their own excesses by opting for the capitalist and “free market” orientation of society. They also sent their war machine against the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus. Both these choices indicate that such a government and such a society are far from gaining the peace of mind that come with being at peace with Allah (ﷻ).

Covenant-bearing Muslims should take note. It has become our responsibility to rescue these wayward societies from the abyss. We should understand that in our attempt to rescue and lead the world we too will make mistakes. But these mistakes must not be institutionalized nor should they be perpetuated. Instead, *inshā’al-lāh*, we should learn from these mistakes, **“And if you should stum-**

ble after all evidence of the truth has come to you, then know that, indeed, Allah is Awe-Inspiring, Wise” (2:209).

Are these people waiting, perchance, for Allah to reveal Himself to them in the shadows of the clouds, together with the angels; although [by then] all will have been decided, and unto Allah all things will have been brought back? (2:210).

This *āyah* speaks to those people of potential influence who are content with being spectators, saying to them, “Do you expect Allah (ﷻ) Himself to do what you are supposed to be doing?” And then the form of speech shifts dramatically when Allah (ﷻ) says, “...although [by then — the time when Allah’s presence is tangible in the *ākhirah*] all will have been decided, and unto Allah all things will have been brought back.”

This quick transition in the *āyah* from “Why are you not doing anything to enter into a state of peace with Allah (ﷻ) in this world?” to “...when all will have been decided [on Judgement Day] when all things will have been brought back to Allah” is another way of clarifying for the reader that his chance on earth amounts to a fleeting and darting momentum. If you do not get involved and make it possible to enter into a total state of peace with Allah (ﷻ) you will straightaway find yourself in the afterlife.

At this juncture the Qur’anic sequence addresses the Prophet (ﷺ), tasking him to ask Banū Isrā’īl — who are the quintessential procrastinators, stallers, and dodgers when it comes to the intent and spirit of scripture — how many times Allah (ﷻ) favored them with the truth. They are the ones who are notorious for demanding that Allah (ﷻ) come down and do their work for them,

[But] they said, “O Moses! Behold, never shall we enter that [land] so long as those others are in it. Go forth, then, you and your Sustainer, and fight, both of you! We, behold, shall remain here!” (5:24).

Ask these Israelis who Allah (ﷻ) presented with an abundance of *āyāt* only to have them reciprocate with an abundance of neglect. These Israelis are the archetypes of turning Allah's (ﷻ) grace into disgrace,

Ask the children of Israel how many perceivable messages We have given them! But if one alters Allah's advancement after it has reached him — certainly, Allah is severe in retribution! (2:211).

We Muslims should learn from our mistakes. The previous attitude of people of scripture when they committed mistakes is brought to light so that we, the inheritors of scripture, do not commit the same mistakes over and over again.

The question, “**Ask the children of Israel how many perceivable messages have We given them!**” is another way of saying that these messages were too numerous to be tallied. All of Israeli history is a lesson of people who turned their backs on God. It is these extended children of Israel who are now in charge of demoralizing the world. They have a choke-hold on the media, Hollywood, and academia, and they are busy doing what they do best: turning their back on God.²³³ Banū Isrā'īl are the anointed class in the world; whether they are degrading women on film or they are raping the financial markets, or they are selling arms to every dictator and two-bit warlord in the world, no one has the courage to link them to global crises that are the result of a degradation of morals, wealth, and security. They are making a living and a killing by rejecting every bit of guidance and favor they have received over the past few millenia.

The Children of Israel know better. But their definition of morality is not binding on the herd of gentiles who, in the absence of Allah's (ﷻ) penetrating words, become susceptible to the insinuations, the suggestions, the imagery, and the “lead” of Satan. And those who claim a genetic lineage to Israel, the Hollywood moguls, are the ones who are manufacturing Satan's virtual reality.

Worldly life appears attractive to those who deny Allah and they ridicule those who are securely committed to Allah, but those whose conscience is watchful of Allah's [power presence] shall be above them on Resurrection Day. And Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning (2:212).

The *kāfirs* who deny Allah (ﷻ) are so attached and so enamored by the very short human life span on earth. This world seems to be everything there is. They cannot seem to sense or “figure out” that life and existence are not worldly centered, worldly bound, and worldly specific. And they have adopted materialism as their undeclared religion. The feelings and the ideas that Muslims have about Allah (ﷻ) and the Final Day are simply not there when it comes to these hard core materialists. They are markedly more concerned with worldly pleasures and pursuits than they are with pre- and post-worldly realities. Materialism is a progressively captivating predilection: the more you sip of this world's merriment the more you want it. On one level it is a philosophical view that says everything is composed of physical constituents located in space and time. Materialists thus deny the independent existence of minds, mental states, spirit, or abstract entities such as universals and numbers. Forms of materialism go as far back as Democritus and Epicurus; the main concurrent variants are physicalism and dialectical materialism.²³⁴

At another level materialists are not philosophical about their materialism; they are creatures of their lusts, loves, and lecherousness. Some excellent examples of this are American youth who are languid, empty, and adrift. They can be anything they want to be, but they have no aspiring reason to want to be anything in particular. Why should Muslims be surprised that such unfurnished persons are consumed with themselves and oblivious to finding means to avoid permanent free fall? The moral drifter has no responsibilities, no hope, and no purpose. He is the television watcher, the apathetic consumer, and the college student who stares blankly for four years from the back of the classroom, waiting, he says, for real life

to begin. To the drifter who denies Allah (ﷻ) and the life to follow, everything is at best a game, a joke, an irony play.

The “morality” behind such Hollywood motion pictures as *Pulp Fiction* and *South Park* is the same: death is funny, nothing is sacred, and everything is absurd.²³⁵ There is no tragedy because there is no longing for something better; there is only darkness, and the futile laughter of a trivializing culture.

Nor is this simply a chimerical culture without consequences. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Littleton, Colorado high school teen murderers, whooped and hollered when they pressed the triggers. In the words of one of the survivors, it was like the two of them, who killed 12 of their classmates, were playing a video game as they acted out the “Gothic” roles glamorized by popular Western culture.²³⁶ The same American nation that mourns over the mayhem at Littleton chuckles at the pop nihilism that comes out of Shayṭān’s Hollywood — and sees no contradiction! But what about the American enlisted men, many of whom are not much older than Klebold and Harris, and have been socialized on the same video war game culture? In the theatre of war, there are no institutional restraints except for a moral conscience, and so we are confident that these soldiers are whooping and hollering just the same as they go out and humiliate, murder, dismember, incinerate, bomb, rape, and pillage the innocent lives and properties of hundreds of thousands. This is what is responsible for the dehumanizing conditions in the US-run Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. For the American soldier to behave in the way he did is one thing, but this soulless culture also produced the armchair defenders of the torture and abuse that took place there — those who had the gall to insinuate that it was just like ritual hazing on US college campuses!²³⁷

“But they who are conscious of Allah’s [power presence] shall be above them on Resurrection Day” (2:212). Here it should once again be reiterated that the translations of the words *ittaḳaw*, *taḳwá* and their derivatives are misleading, especially when the English words *piety* or even *god-fearing* are used. In the several translations of the meanings of the Qur’an into the English lan-

guage, which are widely available, the Arabic word *ittaqaw* is generally rendered as one of the following,

1. guard (against evil),
2. keep their duty to Allah (ﷻ),
3. do their duty,
4. fear Allah (ﷻ), or
5. the righteous.

This undisciplined or inexact translation of the words *ittaqaw* and *taqwá* renders the energizing and practical meaning of the *āyāt* moot and polemical. There is a core meaning for these words and it centers around man's mental, conscious, and behavioral being as he acknowledges his secondary power position to Allah's (ﷻ) primary power position on earth, in life, and in existence. It is this realization of the gap between a committed Muslim's finite power presence and Allah's (ﷻ) infinite power presence that generates a reverence, a fear, an awe and a devotedness that is called *taqwá*. Those who band together with this common feeling and thought of *taqwá* are in Allah's (ﷻ) words in a higher status than those who deny this human-deity relationship. The intensive power presence of Allah (ﷻ) and its recognition by a committed assembly of people on earth in the form of a communal unit and a social order is the nucleus meaning of *taqwá*, a meaning that cannot be delivered by such inanimate words as *piety*, *religiosity*, and similar such words. Committed Muslims are thus required to fear — yes, *fear* — Allah (ﷻ). Does this mean that Muslims have “mixed feelings” about Allah (ﷻ)? In a sense, the answer is yes. We love Allah (ﷻ), we adore Allah (ﷻ), but then we fear Allah (ﷻ), and we are “scared” of Allah (ﷻ). We *love* Allah (ﷻ) because He will honor us for doing justice; but we *fear* Him because He will dishonor us if we do injustice.

The human effort to do justice or to tyrannize on earth is a function of having and exercising power. The act of exercising power in modern times, as well as in lapsed times, is concentrated in the policies and decisions of governments and nation-state authorities. Presidents and kings, who have virtually replaced the fear-of-

God in men's hearts, have usually presided over these power conglomerates. And in doing so they have stolen an attribute that belongs solely to God and not to man. In this unfortunate transfer, a paradigmatic shift has taken place: instead of *taqwá* representing an inferior human relationship to a superior divinity/authority, it has been dislocated and now describes an inferior citizenry's relationship to a superior government. If Muslims of divine devotion are able to season their *imān* with this important ingredient of *taqwá* they will be able to identify the new idols of contemporary times: the almighty governments and the unerring authorities along with their pharaonic and nimrodic figureheads, be they monarchs or chief executives. In light of this fact Allah (ﷻ) says, **"...but they who are conscious of Allah's [power presence] shall be above the deniers of this fact [about *taqwá*] on Resurrection Day" (2:212).**

Usually in the course of thinking about these basic issues the first thing that comes to Muslims' minds is, "But how are we to secure our livelihood knowing that if we oppose unjust governments and oppressive authorities it will be very difficult for us to provide for our families! We know that governments have a way of turning the screws and tightening the grip on our personal, family, and social lives if we ever think about criticizing and disapproving of their immoral and illegal policies." And before fearful Muslims turn this issue into a phobia, Allah (ﷻ) immediately says to them, **"And Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning."**

It is an oversight of many learned Islamic scholars to have left ordinary Muslims with a scant meaning of the word *rizq* when it is located in *āyāt* of contextual value. In summarizing the above idea, it can be said that *taqwá*, once it is understood and acted upon, is a feature that places its human adherents above those who deny it. But then in gaining this feature of *taqwá* Muslim human beings will run into the question of whether they will become poverty-stricken, needy, and destitute people? And in response to that Allah (ﷻ) chose the word *yarzuqu* (He provides). But it means more than that. It means that He provides all the nourishment that is needed in the "animal kingdom" or "animal life." And if this is so

to begin with, then human life is more deserving of it than the lesser forms of life.

However if there is a “mechanism” that kicks in and inhibits this godsend of provisions and sustenance to mankind then it is the result of man employing disproportionate and abusive power against his fellow man. And this in itself becomes another reason why justice-seeking and heavenly-centered Muslims are required to oppose such mal-distribution and malpractice of power by burdensome governments and taxing regimes. This opposition becomes an extension of a Muslim’s sense of *taqwá*. It should be noted here that even though the concept of *rizq* is so preponderant in the Qur’an, being mentioned more than 120 times, there still is no mental construct for it in the public Muslim mind. This is a sad comment on how mindless or unmindful Muslims are when they read the Qur’an. The crucial aspects of this concept will be developed further as it occurs in other places in this momentous Book.

Suffice it here to say that the preponderant notions of secular and materialistic lifestyles with their attendant elements of selfishness, greed, and exploitation have virtually eliminated Allah’s (ﷻ) *rizq* relationship with man. And as serious Muslims seek to regain their long lost sense of *taqwá*, it is timely here to realize that *rizq* (nourishment, provisions, and upkeep) is God-given and thereby, the erroneous fear of its withdrawal should not factor into the mass effort to retrieve the restorative function of *taqwá* in our public and civic life.

Institutional Racism and the Subversion of Human Unity

From discussing how the deniers of Allah (ﷻ) mock those who have less materially, and how *taqwá* becomes the determining factor of status, and how eventually that will become obvious on the Day of Resurrection, the Words of Allah (ﷻ) move on to new areas. Muslims must heed these words,

People once were one *ummah* [social order]; [then they began to differ] whereupon Allah raised up the

Prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it could decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views. Yet none other than the self-same people who had been granted this [revelation] began, out of abuse of power, to disagree about its meaning after all evidences of the truth had come to them. But Allah guided the committed adherents to the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed, for Allah guides on a direct passage him who wills [to be guided] (2:213).

Allah (ﷻ) states in clear language that at one time mankind was one social unit (*ummataṅ wāḥidatan*); they had something like a common program or a common understanding. This could be a reference to the family society, at the dawn of the human race when Adam, Eve (ﷺ), their house, and kinsfolk were the entire human race. This social or familial harmony preceded an era in which people began to acquire exclusive and clannish creeds. But the overriding fact is that all people come from one source and bloodline. All subspecies and races are the descendants of Adam and Eve (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) willed the family to be the building block of all societies; and when a society acted like an extended family it held together. But there came a time when the number of individuals increased, the distances between them increased significantly, climates and geography affected their daily lives, and all of this gave impetus to different human responses and potentials; all of these and other factors impelled social variation and fluctuation. Through population growth and migration the immediate and intimate bonds of the family-based society gave way to societies with distinct characteristics and ideas. In these divergent social units people developed independent notions and unique ways of life.

Beliefs became society-specific or society-centered. Gradually these assorted societies had lost touch with the revelation that had guided Adam (ﷺ). The post-family social divergence away from

the earliest scripture required Allah's (ﷻ) attention; so He sent Apostles (ﷺ) to break good and bad news to these early societies, **“and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it may decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold contrarian views...”**

At this point in human social development, there blossomed a fixed feature of human societies: their right to hold differing views. They have all the right in the world to adopt their own perspective. Actually, this is an inherent feature of human social dynamics. It serves the larger purpose of *istikhlāf* (human empowerment to do God's will) on earth. This task requires human perceptual variations that should complement and corroborate each other. All this construction of a mosaic of human societies should be done in a scriptural frame of reference and within a divine-friendly program of action. The variation in the talents of some societies should be complemented by the variation of natural endowments in other societies. Human social propensities should reflect a fluctuation of potentials that are correlated with a fluctuation of initiatives, **“And so, they continue to hold divergent views — [all of them], save those upon whom your Sustainer has bestowed His grace. And to this end He has created them [all]” (11:118–119).**

This natural human-based variability of potentialities and functions leads to a social variance expressed through peoples' concepts, concerns, and conventions. All these human variations, however, should be within a heavenly inspired way of life. Likewise, this heavenly inspired code of living should be tolerant and inclusive of naturally occurring social propensities. Governments in this unfolding of God's will on earth have no right on one hand to distort God's spoken words to man — words intended to guide the human experience — and nor on the other hand do governments have the right to impose themselves on the unfolding human social expressions that, if given their true range, are in need of heavenly advice. Governments should rather become facilitators that harmonize and organize the twin expressions of *God in man*, **“...and when I have formed him and breathed into him my spirit, then prostrate before him...” (15:29)**, and *God in nature*, **“He alone is God in Heaven and God**

on Earth, and He [alone] is truly Wise, All-Knowing” (43:84).

The very fact that human societies tend to have their own internal dynamics is another reason why these same societies are in need of an anchor and direction. If they are left without Allah’s (ﷻ) words they will drift. These societies will ultimately begin to nurture hatred and hostility toward other societies. The notions and “ideologies” of racism and fascism are obvious examples of this phenomenon. Another social deviation that occurs when Allah (ﷻ), His Prophets (ﷺ), and His scriptures are disregarded is class antagonism and gender polarization. Therefore, such dangerous ideas that become a social disease when Allah (ﷻ) is absent from public and social discourse merit a little more serious attention.

Racism may be one of the longest-lasting social deviations away from the scriptural frame of reference, in which all humans are considered to be created equal. In the intellectual apparatus of societies with racist legacies, past and present, racism until very recently was not regarded as an explanation of social deviation and even perversion, perhaps because most of the people who wrote official history were on the wrong side of the issue. So absent was it from academic, intellectual, ideological, religious, and systemic discourses that Allah (ﷻ) had to send Prophets (ﷺ) and scriptures to address this abomination. Similarly, if we were to recall the information we got from church, synagogue, and mosque sermons of many years and decades, we will be hard pressed to find racism considered among the other historical and social maladies that became so offensive to human well-being that God had to intervene to reverse or correct its offense.

Racism in one sense may describe the self-aggrandizing beliefs or ideas of individuals; in its institutional sense it refers to the anonymous operation of discrimination in organizations, professions, or even whole societies. It is anonymous in that individuals can deny the charge of racism and absolve themselves of responsibility. Yet if a pattern of exclusion persists, then the causes are to be sought in the institutions of which they are a part, the unspoken assumptions on which those organizations base their practices, and the unquestioned principles they use.

This manifestation of man's mistreatment of man, which is to be expected in secular and materialistic societies such as the US and Europe, and its characterization as *institutional racism* was introduced in 1967 by "black activist" Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America*.²³⁸ One might have expected a rabbi, a priest, or an imam to have identified this God-condemned social evil. But because Jewish, Christian, and even Muslim theologians are well ensconced in the establishmentarian definition of society and religion, it fell on the victims of this very same establishment to begin to define the evil they were suffering from. They wrote that racism is "pervasive" and "permeates society on both the individual and institutional level, covertly and overtly." Later writers, such as Douglas Glasgow, sought to restrict the use of the concept to express the fact that, in the 1960s and 1970s,

The "for colored" and "whites only" signs of the thirties and forties had been removed, but the institutions of the country [the United States] were more completely saturated with covert expressions of racism than ever.²³⁹

Glasgow wrote further,

Institutional racism (which involves ghetto residents, inner-city educational institutions, police arrests, limited success models, undernourished aspirations, and limited opportunity) does not only produce lowered investment and increased self-protective maneuvers, it destroys motivation and, in fact, produces occupationally obsolete young men ready for underclass encapsulation.²⁴⁰

On these accounts, institutional racism is shown to be camouflaged in such a way that its specific causes are virtually undetectable, but its results are visible. The racism itself is concealed in the procedures of industries, political parties, schools, and other structures. Defining it *inclusively*, in this broad manner, makes

institutional racism a resonant term and one which has gained currency of late.

The strength of the concept of institutional racism is that it captures the manner in which whole societies, or sections of society, are affected by racism or racist legacies, long after individual racism has disappeared. The racism that remains may be unrecognized and unintentional but, if not exposed and dealt with, it continues uninterrupted.

Institutional racism has demonstrated practical value in highlighting the need for positive, continuous action in expunging racial discrimination, rather than assuming that it will fade. Even organizations committed to “worthy” causes, which would seem to complement the efforts of “civil rights” and “equal opportunities” campaigns, cannot claim to be immune from the effects of institutional racism, as a 1990 civil case in Washington, DC, demonstrates. Eight major national environmental organizations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club, were charged by civil rights groups of racism in their hiring practices. None of the leaders of any of the organizations were African American or Latino, and few of the middle managers were from minority groups; of 315 staff members of the Audubon Society, three were African American. The Friends of the Earth’s staff of 40 included five minority workers. The Natural Resources Defense Council had five ethnic minority staff out of 140. The Sierra Club had one Latino in a staff of 250. The accused organizations’ reaction was typical; they claimed a scarcity of African American or Hispanic people among the pool of trained environmental specialists. The organizations added that they were not aware of the “whiteness of the green movement” and would implement a “concerted effort” to remedy the imbalance.²⁴¹

In none of the attacks on these organizations were individuals singled out, nor were any motives imputed; no one was actually accused of refusing to appoint or promote anyone on racist grounds. Criticisms were based on clinical analysis of figures, with the result that institutional racism was found, in this case, in unlikely set-

tings. This was an example of how accusations of institutional racism can crystallize awareness and promote more aggressive attempts to discourage it. Other examples of institutional racism that have come to light in recent years include,

- Credit policies of banks and lending institutions that prevent people living in neighborhoods of densely populated ethnic minorities from getting home mortgages.
- Seniority rules that, when applied to jobs historically occupied by whites, make more recently appointed ethnic minorities and women more subject to dismissal (*last in, first out* policies) and least eligible for advancement (the *glass ceiling*).
- Restrictive employment leave policies, coupled with prohibition on part-time work, or denials of fringe benefits to part-timers, which make it difficult for the heads of single-parent families — most of whom are women and a disproportionately high number of whom are African Americans — to get and keep jobs and maintain families.
- Implementing height requirements that are unnecessarily, and perhaps unintentionally, geared to the physical proportions of white men, thereby excluding certain minorities from jobs.
- Using standardized academic tests or criteria that are geared to the cultural and educational norms of middle-class white males and that are not indicators of the ability to perform a job successfully.

Another indication of societies deviating from the divine norm of human equality is *ethnic monitoring*, a method of “assessing” the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of *affirmative action*, or analogous programs, by recording the ethnic background or origin of the recruits or existing personnel of an organization. Applicants or members are asked to classify themselves by specified criteria, a typical case being the application for the National Union of Journalists in the UK, which lists²⁴²

1. Black (Afro-Caribbean, including Black British whose forebears originate in or recently came from Guyana or an island in the West Indies)

2. Black (African, including Black British whose forebears originate in or recently came from Africa)
3. Black (Asian, including Black British whose forebears originate in or recently came from the Indian sub-continent)
4. White (UK); or
5. Irish

Proponents of such procedures, such as the Commission for Racial Equality, argue that this is the only means of either measuring the progress of organizations in creating equal opportunities in recruitment, selection and promotion, or of exposing discrimination.²⁴³ Opponents, who include personnel managers of employers and many ethnic minority groups, contend that the questions asked are, at best, impertinent and, at worst, racist in that they encourage the perpetuation of differences in areas where ethnic differences are irrelevant. There is an additional fear over the uses to which such data can be put. Some have called the procedure a “benign form of discursive racialization,” meaning that “racial characteristics” are identified in policy, albeit for benign purposes — the elimination of racism being the main one.

These are the facts of life in a world that is adapted to these types of racist norms. Yet there is nothing in scripture to give this institutionalization of prejudice any validity; however it does warn against the ill consequences associated with the racism that comes out of a warped understanding of the biblical phrases: *God's chosen people*, or *God's chosen race*. It is because of the evil and exacerbation of such socially exploitative tendencies in human beings that

Allah raised up the Prophets as conveyors of good and bad news, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to differ (2:213).

In the midst of the strong forces of racism, classism, and gender-ism the Muslims should pay close attention to Allah's (ﷻ)

words. Taking only one form of racism to its political level, much can be learned from how man deviates from the scriptural standard by adopting self-centered and offending rationales for what would otherwise be a society in need of God's truth, His light, and His way. Describing some aspects of fascism is not intended to pick on a certain race; it is only meant as an example that can easily indict other similar strains of social and political deviations such as Nazism, apartheid, and the Klu Klux Klan.

Fascism refers to a political movement which aspires to a particular form of authoritarian class rule within a capitalist society. It emerged in Western Europe in the period after World War I, although its ideology has much deeper roots in European political action and thought. As a form of class rule it is characterized by an acceptance of a form of capitalism as an economic structure and process, by the elimination of all independent working-class and other political organizations, and by authoritarian forms of political rule and administration. The last are evident in the rejection of bourgeois liberal conceptions of party organization and representation in favor of the establishment of a permanent political elite, and of a corporate state. As an ideology, it is characterized by an extreme nationalism, which commonly but not inevitably becomes overt racism, and an irrationalism, which asserts that the interests of the "nation" must always predominate over all other interests. Although fascist movements have existed in all European countries since the 1920s, only in Germany, Italy, and Spain have they attained political power.

Fascist movements of the past 100 years were a revolt against bourgeois society and the liberal state, as well as against the growing working-class political and trade union organizations. The early support for these movements came from sectors of the populace excluded from both financial and political privilege, and from working-class organizations, notably petit-bourgeois, clerical and professional strata, and the peasantry. Such strata were facing extreme political pressure from "above" and "below" during the major social and economic dislocations that affected Europe after it had put an end to political Islam by defeating the last, weak expres-

sion of an Islamic central authority, the Ottoman State. So any explanation must take full account of both the nature of the strata that gave support to fascism and the conditions that permitted fascism to become, in the eyes of some, “the solution.”

For its backers, fascism constituted a new route to political power and promised, through national reorganization, a new and radically different political and economic future. This revived support from sections of both the not-well-to-do business sector of society and the working class, but the political and financial support of capital became the decisive factor in achieving political power. The route to political power was based on only tactical support for electoral activity, and mostly on paramilitary organization and activity, not only for “self-defense” but also for a coup d’état. Fascism’s vision for the future was a national state purged of all forms of internationalism, from international finance capital to communism; and bourgeois privilege, in which the ordinary man, and sometimes woman, would have his/her rightful place as a member of the national community. The explicit political subordination of women to the task of biological reproduction for the nation, with all its implications, has received particular attention in more recent analyses of fascism. It also aimed at dispensing with upper-middle-class parliamentarianism as a form of government, to be replaced by the rule of the fascist party, which would embody all national interests.

The fascists’ routes to power in Italy, Germany, and Spain differed in important ways. In all three cases, however, the support of important sections of *mustakbirs* (exploitative and oppressive elites) became crucial, both in terms of political credibility and financial support. The emphasis on national regeneration and the suppression of the *mustad’afs* (the weak and oppressed) promised greater economic and political rewards to sections of the dominant class, — facing, as they were, the twin problems of an economic crisis and a strong and politically conscious underclass — than did an upper-class and business-centered parliament. This is why fascism, once in power, becomes a form of discriminatory government.

The relationship between fascism and racism is an interesting one. It was only in Germany that racism came to play out its final

political chapters. Racism became the political ideology and strategy, and this has led some commentators to conclude that a distinction should be drawn between fascism and Nazism. The fascist movement in Germany explicitly promulgated a biologically based notion of German nationalism, and this naturally excluded the “Jews” as an allegedly distinct and inferior “race” that threatened biological extinction of the Master Race, if allowed to survive.

But it can also be said that Italy’s “genocidal” policies toward the Libyans came from the same pulse. The difference between the two cases is that the “biological threat” in Nazi eyes was inside Germany, while the “biological threat” in fascist eyes was outside of Italy. An explicit biological nationalism was not as important in Italy or Spain, but it does not follow that the resulting treatment of the Jews makes German fascism a special case. In all three cases, fascism was not only an alternative form of class rule, which guaranteed a modified capitalism. But more importantly, fascism — or the historical coincidence of the generation of the ideas of “nation” and “race” as a means of political mobilization in the 19th century — meant that nationalism in general contains within it the potential of being expressed by the agency of an explicit racism. This is not simply a matter of historical coincidence but also of the nature of nationalism per se, characterized as it is by a belief in the historical/natural existence of populations sharing a common heritage and culture that must be expressed and organized in a territorial state. The notion of “natural,” cultural distinctiveness can, in particular historical circumstances given the predominance of the common-sense idea of “race,” easily come to be expressed in terms of “racism.”

The defeat of the fascist powers in World War II has not led to the elimination of fascist movements in Western Europe. The political ideology and strategy of fascism was discredited in defeat and in the discovery of the “apartheid” activities of European supremacists against other races and other sections of German and European populations. But small fascist parties have been allowed to continue and have, since the mid-1970s, shown signs of increasing support and activity throughout Europe. In some cases, particularly in Britain,

this has been on the basis of an explicit racism in reaction to the presence and settlement of non-white immigrants.

The *āyāt* now being discussed make it clear that Allah (ﷻ) permits human differences. Race, ethnicity, color, and biological variations among human beings are an expression of His will. But if this expression of divine will begins to generate animosities and hostilities because of human beings' misunderstanding and misinterpretation of God's will, then man is in need of guidance and direction. For this purpose Allah (ﷻ) sent His Messengers (ﷺ): to integrate human societies on the basis of a scriptural aspiration that would express the truth concerning human coexistence on earth.

Are we Muslims today capable of lodging our understanding of the Qur'an's illuminating words in this context of reality? Can we understand that human societies are free to hold differing views, but that the differences cannot be permitted to become an ideology that rationalizes race, class, and gender for purposes of discrimination and exploitation? Can we bring these heavenly words down to our earthly conditions in our time when Europe is experiencing a resurgence of racism and engaging in a growing public debate about Muslim immigrants to Europe, and even about local Muslims who apparently must choose between being European and being Muslim?

This is the impending mass-violation of human rights and human equality in both Western and Eastern Europe. This is a growing trend in Western European countries as diverse as France, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Italy. In the post-communist societies, such as Hungary, Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic, and countries formerly in the Soviet Union, nationalist and racist movements are clearly on the rise. The disintegration of Yugoslavia was accompanied by attempts to move or eliminate whole social groups, mainly Muslims, by means of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Given these trends, it is perhaps not surprising that the question of racism is increasingly a subject of political concern, and that many people are worried by the rebirth of neo-fascist political movements.

From the mid-1980s, evidence of expanding racism and hostility to Muslims and immigrants has been surfacing, with neo-fas-

cist and right-wing political parties using immigration as an issue to attract public support. There were also policies and political strategies to deal with the social and economic position of Muslims and minority communities. In such an atmosphere, there is no doubt that racism and racist movements are an important political force across Europe.

In Western Europe, two factors credited with shaping developments and policy are often singled out. First, it is argued that political changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union helped to create “fears” about the likelihood of mass immigration from the former communist states to countries such as Germany, Italy, and Austria. Second, the issue of immigration from Muslim North Africa became a key political issue in France and other countries. It is argued that political instability and demographic changes were likely to lead to pressures to migrate in the Muslim North African region as a whole, and that this was likely to have a large impact on southern countries such as France and Italy, and hence on the rest of Europe.

In Eastern Europe, the collapse of communism created a political vacuum and brought to the surface the disastrous economic condition of several countries. This resulted in massive social and economic dislocations that exposed the discrepancies between the expectations created by political reforms and the everyday deprivations borne by large parts of society. Extreme nationalist and racist movements were able to attract support by blaming minorities for economic and social ills. In multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies such as the Czech Republic, Romania and the former Yugoslavia, such movements were able to mobilize support by manipulating religious, cultural, linguistic, and racial divisions.

In both Eastern and Western Europe there was widespread confusion in the 1990s about the boundaries of national identity and the role of cultural, religious, and linguistic differences. This spawned a variety of political and social movements that mobilized support with the help of certain symbols and ideologies, which reflected a resurgence of both old-style and new forms of racism. The Vlaams Blok in Belgium and Le Front National in France both

used immigration and anti-Islamic propaganda as key symbols in their political mobilizations. In Germany groups such as the Republikaner and the Deutsche Volksunion used a similar platform and drew support on the basis of opposition to the movement of people from Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The traditional Nazi slogan *judenfrei* was transformed into a call for Germany to become *auslanderfrei*, free of foreigners.²⁴⁴

One of the most pernicious aspects of this renewal of racist movements was the growth of attacks on “foreigners,” particularly Muslims, and the use of terror tactics by neo-fascist groups. Although much of the publicity concentrated on Germany, attacks on minorities increased throughout Europe. The targets of such attacks were not only migrants and foreigners such as the Muslims in Germany, but native European national minorities such as the indigenous Muslims in the Balkans and Gypsies in Hungary and Romania. There was also an intensification of ideological and political struggle around the expressions of racism that claim not to be racist. While many groups openly used racial symbols, others presented themselves as defenders of “national” interests and attempted to dissociate themselves from racism as an ideology of superiority of biological difference.

Perhaps the most glaring problem in European societies is the lack of serious debate about the best ways to tackle the growth of racism, and the lack of articulation of appropriate anti-racist initiatives. It should be noted that the waves of attacks against minorities, Muslims, and immigrants in Europe has helped to mobilize a sizeable response by anti-racists and minority communities themselves. This has been particularly evident in Germany and France against the jingoistic right and in the attempts by minority communities to organize self-defense strategies. After violent attacks against foreigners in Germany, large demonstrations organized by anti-racist groups took place all over the country. These have helped to increase popular awareness of the dangers posed by the activities of racist movements. But no one has advanced a practical scriptural plan to reconcile these communities together, much less an Islamic and Qur’anic strategy that is able to contain and curtail

racism while advancing a workable solution to human racial tension. Governments are beginning to sense the urgency to curb the activities of racist organizations, as the German government is trying to do with neo-Nazi groups who were involved in attacks on refugees and immigrants. Banning orders against some groups have already been issued. But the question is whether the solution to an internal and psychological problem can be found in government laws and fiat. Or does the solution come from replacing the errant presumptions of racism with the healthy understanding of complementary and cooperative human coexistence?

The human mind and soul should come to the truth and justice that are expressed in the words of Allah (ﷻ) who gave humanity the freedom to enjoy and live with dignity within the physical and mental potentials that He has endowed it with. The Qur'an is Allah's (ﷻ) living voice that declares the natural differences among peoples, societies and races, but refuses to validate prejudiced and bigoted ideologies or policies that emerge from such differences or because of such differences. If European societies ignore this divine authority and advice, they do so to their own peril. And if other societies sidestep this sacred criterion and choose to follow the European model, they too will incur devastating results.

How many societies, communities and populations have tried in vain to solve such issues of history? Would it not be more mature and timely, after humanity's long ordeals with man-made ideologies and politics, to realize that our rational potential has to be spent, not on trying out man-made ideologies, but on trying together to understand what God, who is impartial and infinite, has to say about our worldly affairs?

This Qur'an of truth and justice did not come to deny the obvious differences that do exist. It came to strengthen the relationships between and among individuals and societies on the basis of mutual understanding, mutual love and care, and a free exchange of knowledge and ideas. It is for this reason Allah (ﷻ) sent His chosen Prophets (ﷺ) and His sacred Scripture. It is this precise fact that is lost on many subscribers to Islam in our day and time, when the need is pressing to tie these socio-political issues to

the only answer of truth we have; that is, the wise words of the quintessential Qur'an. We cannot accept the human mind as the sole frame of reference for the nagging and fractious issues of history that have outlived human philosophies and defied man-made ideologies. The human mind cannot offer mankind fair and rightful answers to the ancient and present questions about life, existence and destiny. The only satisfying criterion for a decent human presence on earth is Allah's (ﷻ) guidelines and goodness.

The human mind, though, is qualified to understand and analyze what Allah (ﷻ) is telling it. Men and women are required to deploy all their intellectual abilities to examine and explore these words and meanings of the Qur'an. And in sincerely doing so they will discover there is more than one explanation to a particular *āyah* or to a particular word. And this also becomes another factor that enriches the Islamic experience. But there are also erroneous readings of what Allah (ﷻ) is saying. Some individuals — who in the majority of cases are tied to the status quo or who are rubber-stamping the established un-Islamic power elite — will twist and torture the words and *āyāt* to justify the current state of affairs. In recent times religious hirelings have come to say to the Muslim public that it is “Islamic” to reach a “peace arrangement” with Israel. These imposters wear religious attire, and can be found in many Muslim countries, **“Yet none other than the self-same people who had been granted this [revelation] began, in acts of internal offense, to disagree about its meaning after all evidence of the truth had come to them” (2:213).**

It is interesting to note that irreconcilable interpretations of the wise Writ began to appear not as a matter of innocent and competitive exertions to try to grasp the full meaning of the Scripture, but as a matter of intragroup *baghy*. *Baghy* is an act of offensive activity, umbrage, and a breach. It has more to do with a behavioral infraction by one sophist or many against the solemn and honest mental attachment to the intents and purposes of the revealed writ. Indirectly, the *āyah* implies that the Qur'an tolerates a plurality of interpretations as long as they are compatible. But division begins to set in when “interpretations” have an in-house “hostile” content

to them. This *baghy* may be an expression of ego, greed, lust, or worldly gains, and has actually happened throughout Muslim history. But if humans could not avoid deviation from the Qur'an, that does not mean that the Qur'an should be judged by the errors of its adherents. There are deviations in Islamic history, grave ones that began to compound themselves as the centuries passed. But that does not mean that these deviations constitute Islam. Islam cannot itself be tainted by the gradual failure of its habitués or patrons. A deviation is a deviation is a deviation; and whenever it happens Muslims should not foolishly equate it with Islam, and then idly wait for some savior to come along and do the work for us!

But Allah (ﷻ) guided the committed Muslims to the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed, **“for Allah guides onto a straight course him who wills [to be guided]” (2:213).**

These facts have to be circulating in Muslim minds so they measure up for Allah's (ﷻ) clear direction. Allah (ﷻ) does not guide those who fill their time with “religious” idle talk. These words coming from the Eternal are a summary of the experiences of those who lived and struggled, those who behaved well, and those who behaved unbecomingly. Those who are ready to bring these meanings into their lives will find that Allah (ﷻ) will guide them through the “controversies,” arguments, and contentions that have littered history. These are the ones who have a “drive” to reach the truth; they cannot be satisfied with a history that seems divided, a world that seems hostile, and a scripture that seems incomprehensible. Their God-given integrity and their God-driven ambition will secure for them at the end of the day Allah's (ﷻ) deliverance from the mental debris around.

All of this leads the keen student of the Qur'an to the fact that unifying knowledge and insight can only be gained through the practical and sometimes harsh experiences of life. If a clean-living Muslim intends to place the Qur'an in the real world, he will begin to see that the same people who were so friendly to a personal Islam will be hostile to a public Islam. Those who were so accommodating to Islam as rituals will become intolerant to an Islam of limiting rules. What does a Muslim do when he realizes that “all hell is

going to break loose” if he goes public and political with the Qur’an? Not because he is power hungry but because people deserve to know this truth; and this truth is not private, it is universal. Some insulated Muslims today spend a lifetime thinking they are on their way to paradise by sticking a *miswāk* (toothbrush) in their mouths and doing *istinjā’* absolutely correctly. They should listen carefully to this *āyah*,

[But] do you think that you could enter paradise without suffering like those [committed devotees] who passed on before you? Tribulation and suffering befell them, and so disturbed were they that the Apostle, and the committed disciples with him, would exclaim, “When will Allah’s support come?” Certainly, Allah’s support is [always] near! (2:214).

This *āyah* makes it clear that one of the main qualifiers for entering the domain of bliss is the worldly tussle with those who are opposed to Allah (ﷻ) and Islam, a clash that takes place simply because there are hard core enemies of the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) who fight the diehard supporters of the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ). The issues dividing them are not the toothpaste they choose or the style of clothes they wear. Tribulation, affliction, and distress that lead the divinely guided Muslims to ask, **“When will Allah’s support come?”** are not the result of fighting over the length of someone’s beard, or the color of someone’s *ḥijāb*, or the exact minute of *imsāk* and *iftār*, or whether one should drink standing up or sitting down. The real issues are conveniently omitted from the programs of image Muslims and cultural Muslims, for which reason they will never know the meanings of affliction and calamity, although they will assure you they are on their way to paradise.

Some of these issues that have to be factored into our understanding and presentation of the Qur’an and Sunnah, and that will put us in the ambiance of this *āyah*, are: abortion, aggression, AIDS, “anti-semitism,” apartheid, armament, art, authority, *riddah* (treason), capital punishment, capitalism, censorship, child abuse,

“church and state,” citizenship, civil disobedience, class, “clergy,” communism/socialism, conservatism, corporatism, cults, cultures, democracy, determinism, development, disarmament, domestic violence, drug addiction, ecological consciousness, emancipation, embryo research, the environment, equality, espionage, ethnicity, eugenics, euthanasia, evil, evolution, experimentation, feminism, free will, “fundamentalism,” gender, genocide, government, homelessness, homophobia, human rights, hunger, ideology, imperialism, individualism, industrialization, international relations, justice, love, markets, marriage, media, migration, miracle, modernity, transnational companies, nationalism, natural law, natural rights, nihilism, nuclear energy, organ transplantation, pacifism, patriarchy, peace, “political theology,” politics, population control, pornography, poverty, power, property, prostitution, punishment, racism, rape, realism, revolution, ritual, sects, secularization, sexism, sin, slavery, society/socialization, soul, state, suffering, suicide, theocracy, tolerance, torture, totalitarianism, trade unions, truth, unemployment, urbanization, usury, vegetarianism, violence, war, war crimes, welfare, women’s ordination, and work.

This is a long list; but there are those minds that want to know what Muslims are talking about when they speak about Islam beyond its ritual and ceremonial expression. There is a whole world of issues that do not appear on the Muslim mental radar. It is precisely these issues that have been deleted from public discourse by a successful, multi-generational campaign to dumb down the Muslims. In how many *khuṭbahs*, conferences or speeches do Muslim scholars discuss such issues through the Qur’an and the Sunnah? There is a lot of work to be done. It is only when Muslims look for answers in the Qur’an and the Sunnah that they will begin to discover who their true opponents and enemies are.

It is true that from time to time, once or twice a year, a committee of *faqīhs* and learned Muslim scholars of a variety of disciplines meet in a city somewhere and discuss a few of these issues for a day or two; put together some opinions, issue a communique, and think that they have performed their duty. The harsh truth is that these issues have to be addressed by the Muslims en masse, and if


they are not able to do so then it would seem — in light of the above *āyāt* — that they are not on our way to *Jannah*. The cogent Islamic response to all of these issues has to become a serious collective challenge to those who have hijacked humanity and the world, and are leading them to disaster.

The answer to the question “**When will Allah’s help come?**” is that it is coming, provided that we resist and stand firm for our God-given guidance. And remember that when we take on the unreliable ideological mind and the governments of this time, we are in a position directly analogous to that of previously inspired men of God. We have been preceded by about 124,000 Prophets (ﷺ), or *nabīs*, and their followers. Among these Prophets (ﷺ) were 315 Apostles (ﷺ), or *rasūls*. From all of these, only 20 *nabīs* and five *rasūls* (Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsá, ‘Īsá, and Muhammad — ﷺ) are mentioned by name in the Qur’an. All of these inspired people of Allah (ﷻ) were in essence communicating one message. And when we carry that message and that task forward in our generation we should know that this is the oldest program on earth. It has not survived because it is a cult or a country-club activity; it survives because our predecessors struggled, fought, and died for its value, which can only be appreciated once we enrich it with our experience, thoughts, and sacrifices.

If we continue this work, we work our way to paradise. If we struggle along this time-honored course, we will be moving toward everlasting bliss. This is the destiny of Allah’s (ﷻ) humble and hand-picked servants. It is a course of strong belief, unyielding jihad, and trying times. All this will assuredly be followed by support and succor.

This *āyah* and others like it in the Qur’an, 12:110, 2:155, 29:1–3, 3:142, 85:4–8, should be presented to ceremonial and pro forma Muslims who parade their rituals, exhibit their inherited foibles, and then think that this kind of religious automation will deliver them to paradise. It takes more than appearances and a cosmetic interpretation of this longstanding Message and Book to bring us nearer to our eventual objective: *Jannah*.

Endnotes

1. The second part of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, from *āyāt* 142–214, spans a little less than two-thirds of the second *juz'* of the Qur'an. A *juz'* is a traditional volume of the Qur'an, which consists of 30 volumes in all. The sectioning of the Qur'an into *juz'*s did not take place at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), but was done by al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, who was the governor of Iraq during the reign of Umayyad emperors 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān and al-Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik. Although the *juz'* system divides the Qur'an into 30 roughly equal sections (intended so that the Qur'an could be completed in one month by reading one *juz'* per day), it is sometimes problematic because a volume dividing line may occur right in the middle of a particular train of thought.
2. This refers to the First Zionist Congress, a symbolic parliament for those who were in favor of setting up a Jewish State in Palestine, that held its first meeting of delegates from all over Europe in Basle, Switzerland, August 29–31, 1897. The meeting was organized and chaired by **Theodor Herzl**, the founder of modern Zionism. After reaching an agreement on the Zionist platform, the delegates coalesced into a body that ultimately became known as the World Zionist Organization. At the time the first meeting took place, the majority of Reform and Orthodox Jewish community leaders were opposed to Zionist goals and aspirations.
 
3. **the Ummah** – with a definite article, it refers to the worldwide body of Muslims functioning as a coordinated entity that jointly conforms to Allah's (ﷻ) authority and implements a set of social principles that lead to human interactions on a standard of justice, equity and balance; in a generic sense, the term means a group of people working as a unit to accomplish a common objective.
4. social order – in our world, this would refer to a nation, a country, or a tribe.
5. There is no Muslim community in the West where a few of its members do not cite the examples of powerful minorities within the dominant culture (such as Jews, mostly) with a view to suggesting that Muslims should look at them as an example of how to become involved and to acquire power in the political process of the country they happen to live in. Most of these Muslims do not have the time or desire to look into the Qur'an so that they can figure out what the nature and quality of their political involvement ought to be; they have already made a decision to be politically active within the means they are permitted by the powers that be. They may even pepper their position by a few *āyāt*, here or there, that have been judiciously picked out (to the exclusion of others) to validate their actions.

The Qur'an was meant to inform the Muslims' mode of behavior, not act as a validation instrument for anything and everything they happen to dream up on their way to having some power and self-respect in society. In point of fact, these Muslims have an inferiority complex; they look at themselves like a minority and begin to function like one. They think that because they have no worldly power, everything about their very identity is somehow deficient. Power in the hands of man is what determines their measure of a human being. And because they have no such power, they feel they are at the bottom, and are ready to subsume almost anything of what they have to those who have a very little bit of transitory power on earth, regardless of their moral and social character. The people in power, knowing this because they intentionally set up society with these disparities, are ready to take anything offered up by these "inferior" Muslims who are ready to please at any given opportunity. Any Muslim who looks at AIPAC or any other political action committee that is tailored on the fabric of exchanging money for power, all other considerations aside, should look at himself twice in the mirror. Any Muslim involvement in the domestic political process that does not carry with it the antipathy of atheistic power should be suspect. And any Muslim social activism to bring stability to human relations that is not met with the repulsion of the home society's power brokers along with all the lies and name-calling typically directed at socially conscious and conscientious Muslims should be dubious.

- 6 How deeply Jewish is Hollywood? At the end of 2008, here are some of the top executives who run the largest studios in Hollywood: News Corporation President Peter Chernin (Jewish), Paramount Pictures Chairman Brad Grey (Jewish), Walt Disney Company Chief Executive Robert Iger (Jewish), Sony Pictures Chairman Michael Lynton (Dutch Jew), Warner Brothers Chairman Barry Meyer (Jewish), CBS Corporation Chief Executive Leslie Moonves (Jewish, his great uncle was the first prime minister of Israel), MGM Chairman Harry Sloan (Jewish) and NBC Universal Chief Executive Jeff Zucker (Jewish). Harvey and Bob Weinstein (both Jewish) founded Miramax Films. Source:
Joel Stein, *How Jewish is Hollywood?* (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Times, Opinion Section, December 18, 2008).

What about the Federal Reserve System? Of the members of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke (Chairman), Donald Kohn (Vice-Chairman), and Randall Kroszner are Jewish; the religious affiliation of Kevin Warsh, Elizabeth A. Duke, and Daniel Tarullo is not known, although Kevin Warsh's father-in-law is Ron Lauder (powerful Jew) of the Estee-Lauder company. Frederic S. Mishkin (Jewish), a recent member of the Board of Governors whose term was to end in 2014, recently resigned dur-

ing the financial crisis of 2008–2009. At least eight of the 12 presidents of the individual Federal Reserve Banks are Jewish. Timothy Geithner, who was the president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank and is now the Treasury Secretary in the Obama administration, is Jewish.

- 7 **Liberation Theology** – an interpretation of theology originating in Latin America in the 1960s CE, and later becoming popular in many developing western countries. Accepting a Marxist analysis of society, it stresses the role and mission of the Church to the poor and oppressed in society, of which Christ is understood as liberator. Its sympathy for revolutionary movements led to clashes with established secular and religious authorities. Liberation Theology is devoted to freeing the poor from oppression (Matthew, 19:21, 25:35, 40). Initiated by the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutierrez (1928–present) in *The Theology of Liberation* 1969, and enthusiastically (and sometimes violently) adopted in Latin America, it embodies a Marxist interpretation of class struggle, especially by Third World Nations. It has been criticized by some Roman Catholic authorities including Pope John Paul II.

Natural Theology – a type of theology based on reason and human experience, as opposed to a “revealed theology,” which is based on scripture. It has no clergy, but its main proponents are considered to be the philosophers, who argue for or against the existence of God, on purely philosophical arguments, without recourse to a revelation of any kind. It is considered to date as far back as Plato. A few of its more influential proponents in recent years include William Paley (1743–1805), who wrote *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature* in 1802; and Thomas Paine (1737–1809), who wrote *Deism, The Age of Reason* (1794–1807), in which he uses “pure” reason to establish a belief in God.

Theosophy – a pantheistic doctrine of religious philosophy and metaphysics based on the writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), a Russian spiritualist. Heavily inspired by elements of Jewish mysticism (Kabala), Zoroastrianism, and Hinduism, theosophy holds that all religions are attempts by the “Spiritual Hierarchy,” (apparently referring to the pantheon of Hindu deities) to help humanity in evolving to greater perfection, and that each religion therefore has a portion of the truth. Along with co-founders Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge, Blavatsky started the Theosophical Society in 1875. Its three main goals were (1) to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color, (2) to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science, and (3) to investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man. On its emblem are inscribed the words, “There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth.”

- 8 From Anas ibn Mālik and recorded in al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī.
 أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم : كان أول ما قدم المدينة نزل على أجداده . أو قال أخواله من الأنصار . وأنه صلى قبل بيت المقدس ستة عشر شهرا . أو سبعة عشر شهرا . وكان يعجبه أن تكون قبلته قبل البيت . وأنه صلى أول صلاة صلاها صلاة العصر . وصلى معه قوم . فخرج رجل من صلى معه . فمر على أهل مسجد وهم راكعون . فقال: أشهد بالله لقد صليت مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قبل مكة . فداروا كما هم قبل البيت . وكانت اليهود قد أعجبهم إذ كان يصلي قبل بيت المقدس . وأهل الكتاب . فلما ولي وجهه قبل البيت . أنكروا ذلك .
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 This portion of the *tafsīr* was written over 10 years ago when Sudan was trying to pursue an Islamic model of governance. In the course of these last ten years, some of their activities among others, including the military rule of ‘Umar al-Bashīr, cannot be given Islamic credibility.
- 12 Roy G. D’Andrade, *Culture and Personality: A False Dichotomy*, as a paper in the book:
 David K. Jordan and Marc J. Swartz (editors), *Personality and the Culture Structure of Society*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990).
- 13 **Freemasonry** – a secret order/society. Its members are said to be from different religious and political persuasions. Upon initiation into this secret fraternity the members are sworn to secrecy pertaining to all activities or responsibilities of this fraternity. Most of its activities are believed by some to be Eurocentric and by others to eventually lead to the reconstruction of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem (al-Quds). There are citations of Freemasonry’s involvement in the American, French, and Russian revolutions. In what is called “conspiracy theory” literature the following American presidents appear as members of Freemasonry: Washington, Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, Garfield, Taft, Harding, Truman, Ford, and both Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt. Other famous American Masons include John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, Douglas MacArthur, J. Edgar Hoover, and Hubert Humphrey. Historical non-American Masons include: Winston Churchill, Cecil Rhodes, Horatio Nelson, Duke Arthur Wellington, Sir John Moore, Simon Bolivar, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Franz Joseph Haydn (who provided the melody to *Deutschland uber Alles*), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Voltaire (Francois-Marie Arouet), Giuseppe Mazzini, Mikhail Bakunin, Aleksandr Kerensky, Aleksandr Pushkin, Benito Juarez, and Jose de San Martin.



What is of overlapping concern is the Freemason's presence in the Islamic East. They were involved in the termination of the last central political authority in Islam (the Ottoman State). They still have a substantial behind-the-scenes presence in contemporary Turkey; Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a member. And if the goal of Freemasonry which is only known to its senior Shriners is the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple, then their presence in Arabian countries in their discreet and scattered lodges should be assumed to fulfill that goal.

- 14 **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** – a financial agency affiliated to the United Nations, and located in Washington, DC. It was formed in 1945 to “promote international monetary cooperation, trade, and exchange rate stability, and to give financial assistance to states in need.” As of the year 2000 it had 182 members. In 1944, an international conference was held at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, USA, which led to the establishment of the international monetary system, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The agreement, signed by the USA, UK, and 43 other nation-states, aimed to “control” exchange rates, which were fixed for members in terms of gold and the dollar. The system was used until 1973, when floating exchange rates were introduced.



International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) – a bank, generally known as the World Bank, founded in 1945, “to help raise standards of living in the developing countries.” It is affiliated with the United Nations and based in Washington, DC.

- 15 The only religious communities that have come out against Freemasonry are the Catholic Church and the Muslims. The Catholic Church considers the Freemasons to be deists and their principles irreconcilable with Church doctrine; thus it is disallowed for any professed Roman Catholic to become a member of a masonic lodge. Since the middle of the 18th century, many papal pronouncements have been routinely issued against Freemasonry, with the latest one by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI after the death of Pope John Paul II.

Muslims generally have associated Freemasonry with Zionism and the desire to convert the Holy Land into the personal property of European and Israeli racists. In most countries where Muslims represent the majority population, Masonic temples and lodges are not allowed. Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Malaysia, and Lebanon are the notable exceptions. In Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, anyone openly promoting Zionist causes, including freemasons, would receive the death penalty; however after the US occupa-

tion of Iraq in 2003, the ban on Freemasonry was lifted, and in 2007 the first Iraqi lodge in over 100 years was granted a charter.

- 16 **Wye River Accords** – a 1998 memorandum signed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (1949–present), and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat (1929–2004), at the Wye River Plantation conference center in Wye River, Maryland, USA. The settlement was negotiated with the US, under the auspices of President Clinton (1993–2001, as president), acting as the chief mediator. The major issues relating to the status of Jerusalem, the return of Palestinian refugees, and halting occupation activity in the West Bank (euphemistically referred to as settlements) were never discussed. The major points discussed were related to Israel's security and disarming the Palestinians, with permanent status considerations delayed to future meetings. There was also no discussion about limiting the arms shipments from the US to Israel. The Wye River understandings fell apart after the al-Aqsa Intifada, in response to continued Israeli land confiscation activity and targeted assassinations of Hamas and PLO representatives.

- 17 **Professor As'ad 'Abd al-Rahmān**, is an Executive Member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Minister for Palestinian Expatriates and Diaspora in the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Palestine International Institute. He is also chairman of the Palestinian Encyclopedia. In a 2004 article, he wrote the following, "I vow that I'll burn every Palestinian child that will be born in this area ... I vow that if I was just an Israeli civilian and I met a Palestinian, I would burn him and I would make him suffer before killing him. With one hit I've killed 750 Palestinians (in Rafah in 1956). I wanted to encourage my soldiers by raping Arabic girls as the Palestinian woman is a slave for Jews, and we do whatever we want to her and nobody tells us what we shall do but we tell others what they shall do," said Ariel Sharon in an interview with General Ouzé, Merham, 1956.



"How could such a blatant and racial utterance go hardly noticed while Palestinians are portrayed as a people fed on a doctrine of hate for all Jews? The answer of course lies in the power of the mass media and the omnipotent Zionist propaganda machine.

"All three [*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News and World Report*] are also owned by Jews. Among the giant publishing conglomerates, three of the six largest book publishers are owned or controlled by Jews. Another publisher of special significance is Western publishing.

"Although it ranks only 13th in size among all US publishers, it ranks first among publishers of children's books with 50 per cent of the market. Its chairman and CEO is a Jew.

“The Jews constitute only 2.8 percent of America’s total population. But nearly all the people who shape young Americans’ concepts of reality, of good and evil, of permissible and impermissible behavior, are Jews. The Jewish control of media gives them a decisive influence on the political systems and virtual control of the US government.

“No wonder then that Israeli atrocities are downplayed and often overlooked while Palestinian acts of resistance are exaggerated and dubbed as indiscriminate acts of senseless ‘terror.’” Source:

As’ad Abdul Rahman, *As’ad Abdul Rahman: Jews use media as a weapon*, (Gulfnews.com: Al Nisr Publishing LLC, December 4, 2004).

18 **The Arab Dream** (*al-Ḥilm al-‘Arabī*), a feature short-film by Palestinian director, Elia Suleiman, 1998. The film cannot be shown in any Arabian country these days because it causes people to have so much sympathy for the Palestinians. He also made the film *Divine Intervention* (2002), for which he is best known, and won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

19 **Lynne Cheney** (1941–present) – wife of US Vice President Dick Cheney (2001–2009, as vice president); earned a PhD in 19th-century British Literature from the University of Wisconsin. She was the chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1986–1993, was a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and has also served on the board of directors of Lockheed Corporation. She has been the author of a host of books including patriotic American stories for children.

20 From Qatādaḥ and recorded by al-Shawkānī.

أَنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا أَشْكُ وَلَا أَسْأَلُ

21 **Saddam Hussein** (1937–2006) – absolute ruler of Iraq from 1979–2003, when he was deposed by the United States and later executed in 2006. He was launched into power by the CIA who not only viewed him as a bulwark against communism, but also gave him enough intelligence on his rivals, so that he could eliminate them. The US continued to support, finance, and coach him throughout the 1980s during the First Gulf War between



Iraq and Iran, where he ordered the usage of chemical weapons against the Iranians. He also used chemical agents against Kurdish civilians in Halabja (1988) and later against Shi’i civilians in the south of Iraq. After he invaded Kuwait in 1989, he began to fall out of favor with his US paymasters, who turned him back in the second Gulf War and then put the entire country under severe economic and trade sanctions leading to the death of nearly one million Iraqi children. After Hussein threatened to sell his oil, accept-

ing only euros as payment, the US formally invaded and occupied Iraq in 2003. He was later captured, forced to defend himself in a show trial, and then ultimately executed by the puppet government installed by the US.

- 22 **Masada** – an area considered by the Jews to be a stronghold, one mile West of the Dead Sea, situated on a lofty, isolated rock in the Holy Land (Palestine). It served as a refuge for Herod's family in 40BCE when it was unsuccessfully besieged by Antigonus Mattathias. Later, Herod (73BCE–4BCE) built a palace there. The Roman garrison was annihilated by Eleazar ben Jair in 66CE. Masada was a zealot fortress until 73CE when the garrison of 960 people under Eleazar committed suicide to avoid capture by the Romans. In later centuries it was a site of a Roman post, a Byzantine chapel, and a Crusader stronghold. A survey in 1955–1956 uncovered the remains of Herod's palace as well as another palace dating from the Hasmonean period. From 1963–1965, extensive excavations were undertaken by the Israeli regime and the finds included scroll fragments and the site of the earliest synagogue (per Jewish sources).

- 23 **Felix Adler** (1851–1933) – a Jewish rationalist philosopher who founded the Ethical Culture movement. He felt that imperial ambitions rather than democratic principles were guiding the US occupation of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam after the Spanish-American War (1898). He also felt that the defeat of Germany in World War I was not enough to make the world safe for democracy; in his judgement, peace could only be attained if all ascendant governments agreed to remain non-imperialistic. Influenced by the moral attitudes of Immanuel Kant and Ralph Waldo Emerson, some aspects of Jewish philosophy, and socialist theories of governance, he used reason to develop ethical principles, suggesting that the human personality is the central force of religion. He was a prolific writer, and in addition to articles and papers, his published books include *Creed and Deed* (1878), *Moral Instruction of Children* (1892), *Life and Destiny* (1905), *The Religion of Duty* (1906), *Essentials of Spirituality* (1908), *An Ethical Philosophy of Life* (1918), and *The Reconstruction of the Spiritual Ideal* (1925).



- 24 **Aeschylus** (525–456BCE) – one of the three great ancient Greek playwrights, who is said to have originated the Greek tragedy. As a young man, he fought with the Athenian army against the Persians; and later in life he devoted himself to writing, turning out as many as 70 plays. Major works that survive include *The Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, *The Suppliants*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *Oresteia* (a trilogy of the three plays: *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*).

25 Eugene E. Brussell (editor), *Webster's New World Dictionary of Quotable Definitions*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), pp. 605–06.

26 From Abū Hurayrah and recorded in al-Bukhārī.

يقول الله تعالى: أنا عند ظن عبدي بي . وأنا معه إذا ذكرني . فإن ذكرني في نفسه ذكرته في نفسي . وإن ذكرني في ملاء ذكرته في ملاء خير منهم . وإن تقرب إلي شبرا تقربت إليه ذراعا . وإن تقرب إلي ذراعا تقربت إليه باعا . وإن أتاني يمشي أتيته هرولة

27 Note that the recorded history of atheism goes back to European Greece; the word *atheism* is derived from the Greek word *atheos* (without God.) And modern atheism (Godlessness) gained official and governmental status in the form of Eastern European and Soviet authorities. What is this European trait of ancient and modern arguments against God?

Xenophanes (570–480BCE) – ancient Greek philosopher whose ideas are contained mostly in poetry. He rejected the idea of the Greek pantheon of anthropomorphic gods, but at the same time, he regarded Nature to be one without limit, immutable, and incapable of change.

28 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 61.

29 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 61.

30 **Evidence Amendment Act of 1869, UK** – allowed people who did not profess a religious belief to give testimony by making a “solemn affirmation,” instead of taking an oath to God.

31 **Charles Bradlaugh** (1833–1891) – free thinking social reformer, born in London. He became a busy secularist lecturer, and a pamphleteer under the name Iconoclast. In 1880 he became an MP, and claimed the right as an unbeliever to make an “affirmation of allegiance” instead of taking the parliamentary oath; but the House refused to allow him to do either. He was re-elected on three occasions, and was finally admitted (1886).

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) – one of the most highly regarded most admired English poets of the Romantic era. Considered to be an idealist, some of his major works include *Ozymandias*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *To a Skylark*, *The Masque of Anarchy*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Alastor*, *Adonis*, and *The Revolt of Islam*. He drowned in a sudden storm at sea while still in his late twenties. His second wife was novelist Mary Shelley.



Annie Besant (1847–1933) — Theosophist and social reformer, born in London. She married the Rev. Frank Besant, but was separated from him in 1873. From secularism and Bradlaugh she passed in 1889 to Madame Blavatsky and theosophy, becoming its high priestess from 1891. In her later years she went to India, where she championed nationalism and education.

- 32 **Advaita Vedanta** – one of the philosophical schools of Hinduism. Its major canonical texts are the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutras*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*; and its principles were first consolidated into written form by Adi Sankara. Advaita literally means *non-dualism* and asserts that the real, essential identity of the Jiva, the individual self, is nothing other than Brahman Itself, the source of everything. There is also the concept of the Atman, the real self. The essential identity of the Atman and Brahman is the most important tenet of Advaita; Brahman is the substratum on which all phenomena are experienced, and also the One Lord who dwells in all beings. The innermost Atman is the same as the One Lord who dwells in all beings, and identical to Brahman. Liberation accrues to those who realize this identity, as an intellectual understanding, as well as something that is grounded through personal experience. Yogic practices help in the road towards such realization, because they help the seeker in practicing control of the senses, and in directing the “internal organ,” consisting of the mind, intellect, awareness and I-ness.



- 33 **Jainism** – one of the oldest religions from the Indian subcontinent, with about four million adherents, mostly in India. The goal of Jainism is liberation of the soul from the negative effects of unenlightened thoughts, speech and action; it is achieved through clearance of karmic obstructions by following the Right View, the Right Knowledge, and the Right Conduct (triple gems of Jainism). There is no supreme divine creator, owner, preserver, or destroyer. The universe is self-regulated and every soul has the potential to achieve the status of god-consciousness (*siddha*) through one’s own efforts. There are five basic prescribed vows: (1) non-violence (*Ahimsa*), to cause no harm to living beings; (2) truth (*Satya*), to always speak the truth in a harmless manner; (3) non-stealing (*Asteya*), to not take anything that is not willingly given; (4) celibacy (*Brahmacarya*), to not indulge in sensual pleasures; and (5) non-possession (*Aparigraha*), to detach from people, places, and material things.

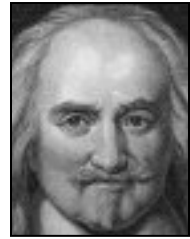


- 34 Refer to p. 130 of Volume 1 of *The Ascendant Qur’an* for a discussion on the *Argument from Evil*.

- 35 **Lokayata (or Carvaka)** – another philosophical school of Hinduism. This doctrine tried to explain the nature of the universe without the intervention of either God or Devil. “Truth” for Lokayata philosophers was that which could be perceived by the five human senses. According to the Lokayata doctrine, the universe was made up of active physical forces (like gravitation) which activated and stimulated each other. But these physical forces although active were not alive as they did not move about consciously towards any set purpose. Lokayata looked upon man and his psyche as a result of the material conditions around him; thus the Lokayata philosophy seems to be a distant cousin of modern Rationalism. Its principle exponent is considered to be the philosopher Carvaka; legend has it that he was incinerated for his crime of apostasy in declaring that the Vedas are not the ultimate in human knowledge.
- 36 **Democritus** (460–370BCE) – Greek philosopher, born in Abdera, Thrace. He had encyclopedic interests and wrote many works on physics, mathematics, ethics, and music, but only fragments of these survive. He is best known for his atomic theory, which he derived from Leucippus, and which was later popularized by Epicurus and Lucretius. He was the subject of Karl Marx’s PhD thesis.
- Epicurus** (341–271BCE) — Greek philosopher, born in Samos. In 305BCE he established his famous school of philosophy at Athens in the Garden, a commune where members led simple lives in peaceful friendship. He is said to have written 300 volumes, but only a few letters and other fragments have survived. He held that pleasure is the chief good, by which he meant freedom from pain and anxiety, not (as the term epicurean has since come to mean) one who indulges sensual pleasures. Epicureanism and Stoicism were the two main philosophies of the Hellenistic period.
- 37 **Titus Lucretius Carus** (99–55BCE) – Roman poet and philosopher whose only surviving work is the epic poem, *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*). The purpose of the poem was to free the mind of his friend or master, Gaius Memmius, from superstition and the fear of death. As for superstition, the poem suggests through logical reasoning and observations that the operations of the world can be accounted for entirely in terms of natural phenomena. He regarded death to be a simple “ceasing to be,” and thus it could not be interpreted as a good or a bad thing.
- 38 **Wang Ch’ung** (27–92CE) – Chinese philosopher of the Han Dynasty who emphasized a secular, empirical, and rational approach in thinking about man and existence. His major work was the *Lunheng* (*Discourses Weighed in the Balance* or *Critical Essays*), in which he wrote on many subjects includ-

ing morality, governance, meteorology, and astronomy. He came at a time when Confucius and Lao Tzu were basically treated as gods, people were highly superstitious, and natural forces were viewed as an indication of Heaven's (that which is beyond the earth) anger or pleasure. He reacted against this, giving a rational and naturalistic account of the world and the place of man in it. He felt that Heaven has no purpose for human beings, good or bad, and as vast as it is, cannot change itself to accommodate man, as insignificant as he is.

- 39 **Thomas Hobbes** (1588–1679) – political philosopher, born in Malmesbury, Wiltshire. He studied at Oxford, and began a long tutorial association with the Cavendish family, through which he traveled widely and became acquainted with such leading intellectuals of the day as Bacon, Ben Jonson, Galileo, Descartes, and Gassendi. After studying Euclidean geometry, he thought to extend its method into a comprehensive science of man and society. Obsessed by the civil disorders of his time, he wrote several works on government, including *Elements of Law* (1640) and *De cive* (1642). In 1646 he became mathematical tutor to the Prince of Wales at the exiled English court in Paris, where he wrote his masterpiece, *Leviathan* (1651), presenting his mature thoughts on metaphysics, psychology, and political philosophy. He was a thoroughgoing materialist, and argued that human beings are wholly selfish; enlightened self-interest explains the social contract in which we surrender the right of aggression to the sovereign state. In 1652 he returned to England, submitted to Cromwell, and settled in London. At the Restoration he was given a pension, but continued to be a highly controversial figure. His last works, written in his 80s, were an autobiography in Latin verse (1672) and translations of the Iliad (1675) and Odyssey (1676).



The Restoration – the return of Charles II to England (1660) at the request of the Convention Parliament, following the collapse of the Protectorate regime; but many royal prerogative powers and institutions were not restored. The bishops and the Church of England returned, but Parliament took the lead in passing the Clarendon Code (1661–1665) outlawing dissent from the Book of Common Prayer (1662). The severe religious controls stood in sharp contrast to great ribaldry (behavior and language bordering on indelicacy) in public life — in the drama and London theaters, which were reopened, and at Court — where “gallantry” had become a euphemism for adultery. The exploits of King Charles II, who claimed 14 bastard children by seven different women, seem to have set the tone for Restoration morals.

Deism – the notion that God, or the Supreme Architect, has created the universe but does not alter His creation either by intervening in the affairs of

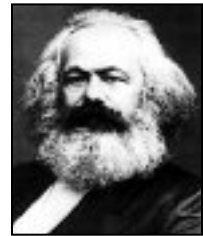
man or by suspending the natural (physical) laws of the universe. It is a belief in the existence of God based on reason and the observation of natural phenomena. Rejecting all notions of revelation, prophethood, and miracles, the idea became popular during the Enlightenment, especially in the UK, the US, and France. Its adherents were mostly Christians who believed in the One God, but had trouble coming to terms with the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus (✝). Deists reject all religions that claim to have a revelation from God, the concept of creation and original sin in the Bible, and all miracles and prophecies. However, they believe that all human beings should behave morally and that there is an afterlife. Some of its main proponents included Thomas Hobbes and Voltaire. Prominent Americans who were influenced by deist thought were Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Paine.

- 40 Paul Henri Thierry Baron d'Holbach (translated by H.D. Robinson), *The System of Nature: or, Laws of the Moral and Physical World*, (Boston, J. P. Mendum, 1889).

- 41 **Ludwig Feuerbach** (1804–1872) – philosopher, born in Landshut, Germany. He studied theology at Heidelberg and Berlin, then philosophy at Erlangen. He was a pupil of Hegel, but reacted against his idealism. His most famous work (1841), *Das Wesen des Christentums* (*The Essence of Christianity*), attacked conventional Christianity and argued that religion is “the dream of the human mind,” projecting unto an illusory God our own human ideals and nature. His “naturalistic” materialism was a strong influence on Marx and Engels.



- 42 **Karl Marx** (1818–1883) – a 19th-century German philosopher, Marx is best known for developing the foundational substance of communism. His ideas set the stage for the socialist movements of the 20th century. He developed the labor theory of value to critique capitalism, as well as the idea of historical materialism, which analyzed the development of European society through its forces of production. He is also known for saying religion is “the opiate of the masses.” His key works include *Das Kapital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Woman Question*, and *German Ideology*.

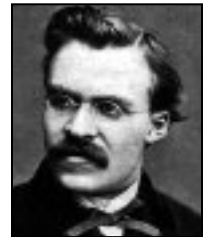


- 43 **Sigmund Freud** (1856–1939) – founder of psychoanalysis, born in Freiburg, Austrian Empire, a Jew. He studied medicine at Vienna, then specialized in neurology, and later in psychopathology. Finding hypnosis inadequate, he

substituted the method of “free association,” allowing the patient to express thoughts in a state of relaxed consciousness, and interpreting the data of childhood and dream recollections. He became convinced, despite his own “puritan” sensibilities, of the “fact” of infantile sexuality, a theory which isolated him from the medical profession. In 1900 he published his major work *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), arguing that dreams are disguised manifestations of repressed sexual wishes (in contrast with the widely-held modern view that dreams are simply a biological manifestation of the random firing of brain neurons during a particular state of consciousness). In 1902, he was appointed to a professorship in Vienna, despite previous academic “anti-Semitism,” and began to gather disciples. Out of this grew the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society (1908) and the International Psychoanalytic Association (1910), which included Adler and Jung. It was not until 1930, when he was awarded the Goethe prize, that his work ceased to arouse active opposition from public bodies. In 1933, Hitler banned psychoanalysis, and after Austria was annexed to Germany, Freud and his family were extricated from the hands of the Gestapo and allowed to leave the country. He settled in Hampstead, London, where he died.



- 44 **Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche** (1844–1900) – philosopher, scholar, and writer, born in Rocken, Germany. He was an out-of-the-ordinary student, and became professor of classical philology at Basle at the age of 24. He dedicated his first book (1872), *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (*The Birth of Tragedy*) to his friend Wagner, but broke with him in 1876, and resigned his university position in 1878 in fast-deteriorating mental and physical health.



He had a complete breakdown in 1889. His highly literary, often aphoristic (cryptic), writings also include *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–92, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*), *Jenseits von Gut und Bose* (1886, *Beyond Good and Evil*), *Zur genealogie der Moral* (1887, *On the Genealogy of Morals*) and his autobiography *Ecce Homo* (published postmortem in 1908, *How one Becomes What One Is*). The characteristic themes are the vehement repudiation of Christian and liberal ethics, the detestation of democratic ideals, the celebration of the *Urbemensch* (“superman”) who can create and impose his own law, the death of God, and the life-affirming “will to power.” His reputation suffered when his views were taken up in a powerful form by the Nazis, but he is now regarded as a major influence on many strands of 20th century thought, including existentialism and psychoanalysis, and on figures as varied as Jaspers, Heidegger, Mann, Yeats, Mannheim, and Foucault.

- 45 **Jean-Paul Sartre** (1905–1980) – existentialist philosopher and writer, born in Paris. He taught philosophy at Le Havre, Paris, and Berlin, was imprisoned in Germany (1941), and after his release joined the resistance in Paris. In 1945 he emerged as a luminary of the left-bank intellectual life of Paris. His novels include the trilogy, *Les Chemins de la liberte* (1945–1949, *The Roads to Freedom*), and he also wrote, especially after the war, a large number of plays, such as *Huis clos* (1944, *In Camera/No Exit*) and *Le Diable et le bon Dieu* (1951, *Lucifer and the Lord*). His philosophy is presented in *L'Être et le néant* (1943, *Being and Nothingness*). In 1964 he published his autobiography *Les Mots* (*Words*), and was awarded (but declined) the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the later 1960s he became closely involved in opposition to US policies in Vietnam, and supported student rebellion in 1968.



Albert Camus (1913–1960) – existentialist writer, born in Mondovi, Algeria. He studied philosophy at Algiers, and worked as actor, teacher, playwright, and journalist there and in Paris. Active in the French resistance during World War II, he became co-editor with Sartre of the left-wing newspaper *Combat* after the liberation until 1948. He earned an international reputation with his nihilist novel, *L'Étranger* (1942, *The Outsider*). Later novels include *La Peste* (1947, *The Plague*) and *La Chute* (1956, *The Fall*), and he also wrote plays and several political works. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957.



- 46 **Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky** or **Dostoyevsky** (1821–1881) – novelist, born in Moscow. He became a military engineer, but turned to literature, publishing *Bednye lyudi* (*Poor Folk*) in 1846. Joining revolutionary circles in St. Petersburg, he was condemned to death (1849), reprieved at the last moment, and sent to hard labor in Siberia. In 1859 he returned to St. Petersburg, where he wrote his masterpiece, *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866, *Crime and Punishment*), one of the most powerful realistic works of fiction. Other important books are *Idiot* (1868–1869, *The Idiot*) and *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879–1880, *The Brothers Karamazov*). Domestic trials, financial troubles (caused by gambling debts), and ill health (epilepsy) clouded his late life. He lived for a time in Western Europe (1867–1871), then returned to work as a journalist in St. Petersburg.



- 47 **Scientific Atheism** – the acceptance that there is no credible scientific or factually reliable evidence for the existence of a god, gods, or the supernat-

ural. The idea, as a way of viewing existence, in recent times, is closely related to Deism. Adherents feel that evolutionary theory has dispelled the idea that the universe was created by a god. The main guide for societies, in their view, is the utilization of credible evidence in personal, political, and national decisions.

- 48 Robert Neely Bellah, *Beyond Belief; Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).
- 49 Allan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).
- 50 Albania was officially declared an atheist state by communist party leader Enver Hoxha (1908–1985) in 1967 and remained so until 1991. South Yemen or the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen became officially atheist in 1970 and remained so for close to 15 years, while the Yemeni Socialist Party was the dominant political party; however, when unification talks with the Yemeni Arab Republic (North Yemen) commenced in the late 1980s, the socialist party lost influence and with it state atheism ultimately vanished.
- 51 According to the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the external debt of the Russian Federation was \$117.9 billion in 1993 and up to \$186 billion in 2003, peaking at \$188.4 billion in 1998. Because of the 2008 financial crisis that has rocked the Western world, the Russian Federation's external debt ballooned to \$542.1 billion in September 2008 (source: http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/credit_statistics/).

The Russian oligarch billionaires, who made obscene profits in the 1990s, especially during Russia's financial crisis of 1998, include, **Boris Berezovsky**, Mikhail Friedman, Vladimir Gusinsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Vladimir Potanin, Alexander Smolensky, Vladimir Vinogradov, and Roman Abramovich. Most of these oligarchs are Jewish dual citizens of Israel and fled there when Vladimir Putin began to take control of the situation, cracking down on their corrupt criminal practices.



- 52 Bruce Bartlett, *Creative Accounting Only Goes So Far*, (National Review Online: National Center for Policy Analysis, September 8, 2004).

According to US Department of the Treasury Figures, the official US public debt or the national debt is \$11.2 trillion and is increasing at the rate of

\$3.83 billion per day. This means that each American citizen's share of this debt is over \$36,500. However, in reality, the actual debt is much higher as the article above (http://www.nationalreview.com/nrof_bartlett/bartlett_200409080940.asp) describes.

- 53 **Jamaat-e-Islami** – Islamic political party founded by Sayyid Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī in 1941 in British occupied India. Its primary aim is to replace secular leadership in Pakistan with an Islamic government; however it does not want to achieve its aims through revolutionary or violent means. Instead it hopes to develop a public consciousness that demands the implementation of Islamic social, political, and economic principles. Its headquarters are now in Pakistan, and its membership is mostly Sunnīs.



SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) – now known as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), it is an Islamic political party, originally founded in 1982 by Ayatullah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm. At the time the party was formed, its primary aim was to overthrow the Ba'ath party regime of Saddam Hussein and replace it with an Islamic government. After Ayatullah Bāqir al-Ḥakīm's assassination in 2003, the party has been led by Ayatullah 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥakīm. Party members are mostly Shī'īs.

Ḥizb al-Da'wah al-Islāmīyah (Da'wah party) – founded in Iraq in 1957 by Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Adīb, Sayyid Murtaḍá al-'Askarī, 'Abd al-Ṣāhib Dukhayl, Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī al-Ḥakīm, Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Qāmūsī and Sayyid Ṭālib al-Rifā'ī, it had the express aim of promoting Islamic values, fighting against secularism, and working toward the establishment of an Islamic government in Iraq. It backed the Islamic Revolution in Iran and after sustained alienation from Saddam Hussein, it moved its headquarters to Tehran in 1979. Today, the party has morphed into a nearly secular party, and is led by the current Iraqi Prime Minister (2009), Nūrī al-Mālikī. Party members are by and large Shī'īs.



- 54 From Bilāl ibn Rabbāḥ and recorded by al-'Irāqī.

أرحنا بها يا بلال .

- 55 It was common knowledge among the companions and everyone else that when the Prophet (ﷺ) was under pressure, his practice was to resort to *ṣalāh*.

- 56 From Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nisā'ī.

شكونا إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم . وهو متوسد برده له في ظل الكعبة . فقلنا : ألا تستنصر لنا . ألا تدعو لنا ؟ فقال : (قد كان من قبلكم . يؤخذ الرجل فيحفر له في الأرض . فيجعل فيها . فيجاء بالمنشار فيوضع على رأسه فيجعل نصفين . ويمشط بأمشاط الحديد ما دون لحمه وعظمه . فما يصده ذلك عن دينه . والله ليتمن هذا الأمر . حتى يسير الراكب من صنعاء إلى حضرموت . لا يخاف إلا الله . والذئب على غنمه . ولكنكم تستعجلون) .

- 57 From Ibn Mas'ūd and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

كأني أنظر إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يحكي نبيا من الأنبياء . ضربه قومه فأدموه . فهو يسح الدم عن وجهه . ويقول : (رب اغفر لقومي فإنهم لا يعلمون)

- 58 From Yahyā ibn Waththāb and recorded by al-Tirmidhī.

المسلم الذي يخالط الناس ويصبر على أذاهم أفضل من الذي لا يخالطهم ولا يصبر على أذاهم

- 59 **Fahd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd** (1921–2005) – king of Saudi Arabia, 1982–2005. Born in Riyadh to Ibn Sa'ūd and Ḥaṣṣāh bint Aḥmad al-Sudayrī. Fahd was the eleventh son of Ibn Sa'ūd. He received a traditional education. During the rule of his father Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Fahd served first as education minister (1953–1960) and then, from 1962, as interior minister. He continued in that position when his brother Faisal ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ascended the throne in 1964. Fahd was promoted to second deputy prime minister in 1967, and to first deputy prime minister two years later. When his brother Khālid ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz became king in 1975, Fahd was named crown prince. On Khālid's death in 1982 Fahd succeeded him. Eldest of the seven sons of Ḥaṣṣāh bint Aḥmad al-Sudayrī, his accession implied the dominance of the Sudayrī Seven in the kingdom.



Of the two trends that emerged among senior Saudi princes during Khālid's reign, Fahd belonged to the pro-American faction, favoring rapid economic westernization funded by vast oil revenues (belonging to the Ummah), and opposed the patriotic trend, which was committed to a greater respect for tradition and slower westernization.

The Fez Summit Peace Proposal (September 1982) – the major points of the proposal required Israel to withdraw to its 1967 borders, including the dismantling of settlements in the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem; called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital; called for the immediate Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon; proclaimed solidarity with Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s,

and commended Iraq for its attempts to end the war; and supported the Somali Democratic Republic against Ethiopian incursions into its territory.

60 **Second Gulf War** (1990–1991) – after Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the United States and the UK, along with nominal forces from 32 other nations, launched a counter-attack to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Known as Operation Desert Storm in the US, the UK and the US accomplished their mission in less than six weeks. The majority of the war costs were paid by Saudi Arabia, around \$40 billion of the total \$60 billion. After the war was over Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf countries, including Kuwait, continued to send hefty amounts of money to the US in return for security guarantees. Some estimates suggest that in a span of 2–3 years, the Arab governments paid as much as \$600 billion. This cash infusion to the US is apparently what launched the IT boom that was responsible for the economically prosperous 1990s in the United States.

61 This refers to the 1993 establishment of the Majlis al-Shura in Saudi Arabia. Under pressure from Washington, which was having a hard time maintaining a public image of supporting those who endorse democratic institutions, Riyadh consented to create a hollow, bogus, rubber-stamp Majlis in order to create the impression that it was reforming its autocratic style toward more inclusive and representative assemblies. In practice, members of the Majlis are able to initiate legislation and review the domestic and foreign policies of the government. Any government action not approved by the Majlis will have to be referred back to the King. The King therefore remains the final arbiter of state affairs. The King also retains the power to appoint and dismiss both Ministers and Majlis members and has the power to dissolve the Majlis, restructure it, and appoint a new one at any time. According to the Saudi consulate in Washington, DC,

“The Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, is a legislative body that advises the King on issues that are important to Saudi Arabia.

“It is a modern version of a traditional Islamic concept — an accessible leader consulting with learned and experienced citizens — which has always been practiced by Saudi rulers.

“The Consultative Council currently consists of 150 members appointed by the King for a four-year renewable term. Based on their experience, members are assigned to committees. There are 12 committees that deal with human rights, education, culture, information, health and social affairs, services and public utilities, foreign affairs, security, administration, Islamic affairs, economy and industry, and finance.”

All Muslims should take a close look at the Consultative Council Establishment Act (http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa01000_.html). All members of

the Council are required to take the following oath of allegiance to the King, "I swear by God Almighty to be loyal to my religion, then to my King and country; I swear not to divulge any of the state's secrets; I swear to protect its interests and its systems and to carry out my duties with sincerity, integrity, loyalty and justice." Any council member who is loyal to his "religion" cannot be simultaneously loyal to kings who routinely violate the spirit and letter of regulations included in their religion, unless both the king and the council member have a religion that consists only of rituals.

62 Such statements refer to those who only take account of the military odds, the human odds, the material odds, and any other odds one may think favor the enemy. But the Muslims who read Allah's (ﷻ) words know that in order to expose the running *nifāq* in their ranks, they have to establish a sense of urgency that leads to a course of action where the odds are against them. In the 2006 Israeli aggression against Hizbullah and the 2008 war against Hamas, there is no question that the worldly odds were against the Muslims, but look at who was exposed for all to see and forswear allegiance: the Saudi, the Egyptian, and the Jordanian governments. In any case, when the worldly odds are against the Muslims, the power odds are always in their favor because of Allah (ﷻ).

63 From Ka'b ibn Mālīk and recorded in Muslim.

إن أرواح الشهداء في جوف طير خضر . لها قناديل معلقة تحت العرش . تسرح من الجنة حيث شاءت . ثم تأتي إلى تلك القناديل . فاطلع إليهم ربهم اطلاعاً فقال : هل تشتهون شيئا ؟ قالوا : أي شيء نشتهي ونحن نسرح من الجنة حيث شئنا ؟ فيفعل ذلك بهم ثلاث مرات . فلما رأوا أنهم لم يتركوا من أن يسألوا . قالوا : يا رب نريد أن ترد أرواحنا في أجسادنا حتى نرجع إلى الدنيا فنقتل في سبيلك مرة أخرى ! فلما رأى أن ليس لهم حاجة تركوا

64 From Anas ibn Mālīk and recorded in al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

ما أحد يدخل الجنة . يحب أن يرجع إلى الدنيا . وله ما على الأرض من شيء إلا الشهيد . يتمنى أن يرجع إلى الدنيا فيقتل عشر مرات . لما يرى من الكرامة

65 From Anas ibn Mālīk and recorded in al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

سئل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : عن الرجل يقاتل شجاعة . ويقاقل حمية . ويقاقل رياء . أي ذلك في سبيل الله ؟ فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم (من قاتل لتكون كلمة الله هي العليا . فهو في سبيل الله) . وفي رواية : أتينا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقلنا : يا رسول الله ! الرجل يقاتل منا شجاعة . فذكر مثله .

66 From Abū Hurayrah and recorded in Abū Dāwūd.

أن رجلا قال يا رسول الله رجل يريد الجهاد في سبيل الله وهو يبتغي عرضا الدنيا فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لا أجر له فأعظم ذلك الناس وقالوا للرجل عد لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فلعلك لم تفهمه فقال يا رسول الله رجل يريد الجهاد في سبيل الله وهو يبتغي عرضا الدنيا فقال لا أجر له فقالوا للرجل عد لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال له الثالثة فقال له لا أجر له

67 From Anas ibn Mālik and recorded in al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

تضمن الله لمن خرج في سبيله . لا يخرجه إلا جهاد في سبيلي . وإيمان بي . وتصديق برسلي . فهو علي ضامن أن أدخله الجنة . أو أرجعه إلى مسكنه الذي خرج منه . نائلاً ما نال من أجر أو غنيمة . والذي نفس محمد بيده ! ما من كلم يكلم في سبيل الله . إلا جاء يوم القيامة كهيئته حين كلم . لونه لون دم وريحه مسك . والذي نفس محمد بيده ! لولا أن يشق على المسلمين . ما قعدت خلاف سرية تغزو في سبيل الله أبدا . ولكن لا أجد سعة فأحلمهم . ولا يجدون سعة . ويشق عليهم أن يتخلفوا عني . والذي نفس محمد بيده ! لو ددت أن أغزو في سبيل الله فأقتل . ثم أغزو فأقتل . ثم أغزو فأقتل .

68 From the hadith collection of Abū Dāwūd.

شهدت مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أحدا فضربت رجلا من المشركين فقلت خذها وأنا الغلام الفارسي فالتفت إلي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال فهلا قلت وأنا الغلام الأنصاري

- 69 Czarist Russian and the Chechen Muslims have been at war since the middle of the 18th century. Russia, feeling that Chechnya is an integral part of Mother Russia, has been against allowing independence or autonomy to the break-away region. Russian troops conquered much of the area by mid-1700s. However, Sheikh Mansur, a Muslim freedom-fighter, gathered the Chechen tribes and revolted against the czar and his army, defeating them in 1785. The latest war between the two commenced in 1994, when Boris Yeltsin initiated a massive aerial bombardment campaign on November 29th, and has continued off and on until today. In 1996, Yeltsin signed a peace agreement with Chechen resistance acting President Zemlikhan Yandarbiyev, but it lasted less than three months. In 2000, Russian troops under the command of new Russian President Putin invaded Chechnya again, capturing the capital Grozny and razing much of the city. Putin declared direct rule from Moscow and Russia appointed Akhmad Kadyrov as head of its administration in Chechnya. Kadyrov was killed in an explosion in 2004, and since then, Moscow's puppet rulers, with help from Putin, have basically exercised martial law and has vigorously pursued members of the resistance. Photo-journalist Stanley Greene has published an excellent, though highly disturbing, account of the brutal Russian occupation of Chechnya: Stanley Greene, *Open Wound: Chechnya 1994–2003*, (London: Trolley, 2003).

The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 in response to US-sponsored and CIA-instigated agitation. The war with Afghanistan was concurrent with the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. By the time the last Soviet troops withdrew in defeat in 1988, over one million Afghans had been killed, five million had fled to Pakistan and Iran, 33% of the prewar population of the country. Another two million Afghans were displaced within the country. In the 1980s, one out of two refugees in the world was an Afghan. Along with the casualties, 1.2 million Afghans became disabled and three million more, primarily civilians, were either maimed or wounded. According to official

Soviet figures, only 14,457 of their soldiers were killed. Kandahar, which was a city of 200,000 people before the war, was reduced to a population of only 25,000. 10–15 million land mines scattered by the Soviets all over Afghanistan continue to kill or maim the unfortunate ones to this day.

70 **Irish Potato Famine (1845–1851)** – killed one million Irish and displaced one million more. By the early 1800s, the potato had become the staple crop for most of the Irish peasant farmers. More than three million Irish peasants subsisted solely on the vegetable, which is rich in protein, carbohydrates, minerals, and vitamins such as riboflavin, niacin and Vitamin C. The possible cause was a disease known as late blight (or infection from a fungus called *Phytophthora infestans*). As their staple crop was destroyed, the Irish starved not only because there was nothing to eat, but mostly because the British and the other Europeans did virtually nothing to help. In fact, the case can be made that because of political, class, and religious differences (Catholic vs. Protestant), the British actually impeded help from arriving to Ireland. One indication of this assessment is the case of Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Majid, who wanted to send 10,000 pounds sterling to Irish farmers. Queen Victoria, however, encouraged the Sultan to send only 1,000 pounds sterling, because she had sent only 2,000 pounds sterling. The Sultan not only delivered the 1,000 pounds sterling but secretly dispatched three ships full of food. The English courts tried to block the ships, but the food arrived at an Irish harbor and was left there by Ottoman sailors.

71 Recurrent flooding in Bangladesh normally claims the lives of thousands of people. Bangladesh is located at the confluence of the Brahmaputra, Meghna, Ganges and Wang Rivers, which converge into a flood plain that forms the largest river delta in the whole world. Routine flooding irrigates the flood plain with nutrient-rich silt, and much of the rural agrarian population is dependent on this occurrence; however excessive flooding, which has been more frequent in recent years, is considered to be a natural disaster and human catastrophe. Recent excessive flooding has taken place in 1987, 1988, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2007. In 2004, nearly 10 million people were forced out of their homes, or lost them altogether. In the 2007 monsoon-related floods, this number doubled to 20 million.

Ancient Thera or Thira – an island 140km north of Crete with a population (in 1992) of 7,400, and area of 75 km². The last great eruption of its volcano (1470BCE), in an explosion four times more powerful than Krakatoa, is thought to be responsible for the rapid decline of the Minoan civilization. The excavated site displays notable wall paintings and three-storyed houses.

Pompeii – ruined ancient city in Naples province, Campania, southwest Italy, at the south foot of Vesuvius, 20km southeast of Naples; an important

port; and an agriculture, wine, and perfume center in Roman times. While it was damaged by a violent earthquake in 63CE, the great eruption of Vesuvius in 79CE covered the whole city with a layer of ashes and pumice-stone 6–7m deep. Systematic excavation since 18th century has revealed a city roughly elliptical in shape, 3km in circumference, with eight gates, and many buildings well preserved by volcanic ash; two-fifths of the city still remains buried. The modern town with a population of 24,000 (in 1992) lies to the east.

Iceland has nearly 130 volcanic mountains. The Laki volcano was the largest recent eruption, occurring in 1734. It is considered to be a volcanic hot spot because the island is located where the Eurasian and North American continental plates meet.

Tsunamis are caused by underwater earthquakes or submarine volcanoes. The most destructive one in recent memory was the one that occurred off the coast of Indonesia in 2004, killing more than 225,000 people in 11 countries. Indonesia was the hardest hit, followed by Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India. Some seismologists have suggested that repetitive underground and underwater nuclear test explosions in the Pacific Ocean may have something to do with these underground earthquakes. Short-term effects of nuclear testing include geological damage and release of volatile fission products into the atmosphere. Nuclear tests can cause landslides; such landslides in the past have given rise to tsunamis causing coastal damage in areas as far away as Pitcairn and Tahiti. They can also release radioactive material into the sea, with catastrophic effects on the food chain in an area such as Indonesia where fish is an important part of the diet.

- 72 According to the World Health Organization, “As of 1 December 2008, the Ministry of Health in Zimbabwe has reported a total of 11,735 cholera cases with 484 deaths since August 2008, affecting all provinces in the country. The overall case fatality rate is 4% but has reached up to 20–30% in remote areas. Out of the total number of cases, 50% have been reported from Budiriro, a high density suburb of the capital city, Harare. Beitbridge, a town bordering South Africa, has reported 26% of all cases. In the last two days, two additional areas have been affected: Chegutu (in Mashonaland West province) and Mvuma (in Midlands province). Reports have also been received from the Ministries of Health in neighboring countries confirming cholera cases have occurred in Musina (South Africa), Palm Tree (Botswana) and Guro district (Mozambique).

“Cholera outbreaks have become more frequent in Zimbabwe since the early 1990s. However, with the exception of the large outbreaks that occurred in 1999 and 2002, the disease has been kept under control through intensified prevention and preparedness activities.

“Cholera is mainly transmitted through contaminated water and food and is closely linked to inadequate environmental management. Recent interruptions to the water supplies, together with overcrowding, are aggravating factors in this epidemic. ZINWA (Zimbabwe National Water Authority) has pledged to correct the water supply and sewage system as a matter of urgency.” (Source: http://www.who.int/csr/don/2008_12_02/en/index.html).

73 Al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah are two hilltops in Makkah having a distance of about 760 *dhirā'* (cubits) between them, which translates into about 350 meters today. They are now both part of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.

74 From Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf, who took it from Sufyān, who related it from 'Aṣim ibn Sulaymān,

قال سألت أنسا . عن الصفا والمروة قال: كنا نرى أنهما من أمر الجاهلية. فلما جاء الإسلام أمسكنا عنهما . فأنزل الله عز وجل : (إن الصفا والمروة من شعائر الله فمن حج البيت أو اعتمر فلا جناح عليه أن يطوف بهما)

75 From al-Sha'bī and recorded in al-Bukhārī.

و قال الشعبي: كان أساف على الصفا وكانت نائلة على المروة وكانوا يستلمونهما فخرجوا بعد الإسلام من الطواف بينهما فنزلت هذه الآية

76 'Umrah involves the central ceremonies of Hajj: the *ṭawāf* around the Ka'bah in Makkah and striding quickly between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah hills. Excluded in the 'Umrah is the standing on Mount 'Arafāt and the lodging at Muzdalifah; there is also no stone-throwing at Minā. It can be performed at any time of the year with the exception of the high holy season of Hajj, the first two weeks of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, — the days reserved for the Hajj proper. Nowadays, the Saudi dynasty has institutionalized and officialized a modern-day bid'ah: no one is permitted to travel to Makkah for the 'Umrah from the time Ramaḍān ends to the time the Hajj is over. That means no one can go to Makkah for Hajj purposes or for 'Umrah during the month of Shawwāl and almost all of Dhū al-Qa'dah.

77 According to Genesis, he left them some bread: And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba (Genesis, 21:14 – King James Version).

78 From 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and recorded in al-Bukhārī.

قال ابن عباس : قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم : (فذلك سعي الناس بينهما)

- 79 Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (editor), *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*. (Oxford, UK: Roundhouse Publishing Co., 1992), p. 667.
- 80 *The New English Bible (with the Apocrypha)*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 217.
- 81 The play, by Terence McNally (an open homosexual), was called **Corpus Christi**, portraying a fictional gay Jesus (called Joshua). In the play, Jesus and his apostles are dramatized as gay men living in modern day Texas. Judas is portrayed to betray Jesus because of sexual jealousy.
- 82 **Dr. ‘Abd al-Ṣubūr Shāhīn** – modern Egyptian scholar very well-known within the circles of the worldwide Islamic Movement; translated the works of the Algerian philosopher Malek Bennabi from French to Arabic; writer, lecturer, and professor.

Malek Bennabi (1905–1973) – a North African Arab philosopher who was born in Algeria and went for higher studies in France. Later, he spent a good part of his life in Cairo. After being refused admission into the Institute of Oriental Studies in Paris, where he had hoped to become a lawyer, he said, “I was called by the Director of the Institute, in the dignified calmness of his office, he informed me of the unlikelihood of being accepted to his faculty no matter how many times I tried, his words made it very clear to me, ‘The entry to the Institute of Oriental Studies, to the Algerian Muslim, is not based on a scientific measure, but on a political one.’ The words of the director came down on my ambitions as the guillotine would go down on a condemned’s neck... On that day, not only was my hope broken, but I felt that the dream of my mother and my father had crashed on the rock.” His writings focused on human society, and particularly on why Muslim societies lost their civilizational momentum. Some of his published works include *The Conditions for Rebirth* (1948) and *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World* (1954), and *Memoirs of this Century’s Witness* (1967), a personal memoir.



- 83 **Al-Najāshī (Negus) of Abyssinia** – just and honorable Christian king of Ethiopia (Abyssinia), who offered sanctuary to fleeing Muslims from Makkah, eight years before the Hijrah. Some Muslims, among them Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālib, stayed in Abyssinia for 15 years. Al-Najāshī is a title referring to a king; his given name was As’ham, and he was heir to the Abyssinian throne but before he could ascend it, one of his ambitious uncles sold him to an Arabian merchant while As’ham was still a youth. He ended up in Arabia where he grazed the animals of a Ḍamrah tribesman in the Valley of

Badr before he got an opportunity to regain his throne. During his stay in Arabia, As'ham established close personal relations with the Ḍamrah tribe as well as with Arabian merchants and became familiar with Arabian customs and traditions. Some hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) indicate that before As'ham died, he had already become a Muslim; and when the Prophet (ﷺ) was informed of his death from above, he prayed *ṣalāh al-janāzah* for him.

84 The Ethiopian church thinks that Pilate became a Christian and was martyred. These Christians have canonized Pontius Pilate whose saint's day is June 25 (source: <http://www.livius.org/pi-pm/pilate/pilate08.html>).

85 From Abū Hurayrah through 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and recorded in Ibn Mājah.
 قال ابن عباس : قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم : (فذلك سعي الناس بينهما)

86 **USS Maine** (1898) – a 6,682 ton US battleship that exploded and sank in Havana Harbor, Cuba, on February 15, 1898. Over 75% of her crew perished in the explosion, triggering the Spanish-American War, and resulting in the US occupation of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. What caused the explosion is still unknown.

RMS Lusitania (1915) – a British “cargo” and passenger ship that was torpedoed and sunk by the Germans on May 7, 1915; 1,198 people were killed in the avoidable tragedy. She was used to ferry “goods” and people between the US and England. Germany apparently fired on and sank the Lusitania because the ship was reported to be carrying ammunition and guns for the allies who were fighting against the Germans in World War I. Ferrying military armaments on a passenger ship was against US law, even at that time. US historians cite this as the major factor for the eventual US entry into World War I in 1917.

Pearl Harbor (1941) – the Japanese bombing of a US military base in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, killing 2,403 American soldiers and wounding 1,178. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (32nd US president) characterized the day as the Day of Infamy. Questions remain about how much the US administration knew about the impending attack by the Japanese, and whether they “allowed” the attack to take place so that the US could rationalize its entry into World War II. Roosevelt had felt that unless the US entered the war, Japan would occupy the Pacific and Germany would occupy all of Europe, including the UK. So earlier in the year, he froze Japanese assets in the US and cut-off all steel exports to Japan, violating US trade agreements with Japan. Also he covertly helped the Chinese nationalists against the Japanese. Some of these actions may have contributed to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Gulf of Tonkin (1964) – on August 2, 1964, the USS Maddox, a US destroyer (warship), claimed it was attacked by three North Vietnamese P-4 patrol torpedo boats 45km from the North Vietnamese coast in international waters. The USS Maddox claimed to have evaded a torpedo attack and opened fire, forcing the patrol craft away. Two days later the Maddox reported a second engagement with North Vietnamese vessels. As an outcome of the two incidents, the US Congress allowed then US President Johnson “the authority to assist any Southeast Asian country whose government was considered to be jeopardized by ‘communist aggression,’ including the commitment of US forces without a declaration of war.” This was the justification for the US to start a war against North Vietnam. A few days after the incidents, President Johnson was heard to have said privately, “For all I know, our Navy was shooting at whales out there.” Well before the incidents occurred, the US had been running a classified covert operation against North Vietnam since 1961: *Operation Plan 34-Alpha*. The maritime portion of the operation was to give high speed patrol boats to the South Vietnamese, so that they could attack the North Vietnamese from the sea. Several years later, the US would admit that it had been cooperating with the South in its attacks on the North.

Second Gulf War (1990) – this was the US (mainly, even though there were 34 other countries involved) response to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990. There are open questions about whether Saddam Hussein was lured into Kuwait so that the US would have an excuse to go in and destroy Iraqi chemical, biological, and (nascent) nuclear weapons capabilities, even though all these capabilities were built by American and European suppliers and advisers. So long as Saddam Hussein was using these weapons to kill Iranians, this was OK with the United States. At the time, Iraq had a standard of living equal to that of Italy, but after the war, Iraq’s entire infrastructure was in shambles, and the rest of the Gulf States were forced into accepting a permanent US military presence on their lands.

9/11 – the infamous incident, occurring on September 11, 2001, in which two passenger airliners crashed into the World Trade Center Towers in New York; another alleged passenger plane crashed into the Pentagon; and a fourth alleged plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, about 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. 9/11 was used by the US as a basis to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003, and to attack Afghanistan in 2001. A whole host of conspiracy theories, suggesting that this was an inside job led by Mossad and US government covert operatives, have emerged mainly because the majority of official explanations have been suspect. Former Italian president, Francesco Cossiga (1985–1992, as president), has indicated that it is well-known in the European intelligence community that this was a Mossad/CIA job.

- 87 **Dr. Ali Shariati** (1933–1977) – Iranian professor of comparative religion, and one of the ideologues of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Went to prison in Iran for his views. Died mysteriously of a heart attack while in Southampton, UK. Many informed people suggest that he was poisoned by the CIA and the Iranian covert operations agency SAVAK. Some of his published books include *Hajj (The Pilgrimage)*, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique*, *Jihad and Shahadat*, and *Reflections of a Concerned Muslim on the Plight of Oppressed People*.



Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949) – founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the most successful Islamic organizations in the Muslim and Arab world. The organization, almost since its founding, has been suppressed and its members routinely jailed and tortured in its home country of Egypt. Its members have not been allowed to exercise any degree of political and social self-expression. Ḥassan al-Bannā started his mission in the modest ambiance of Egyptian coffee houses and in a short time, transformed the social, political, and economic landscape of the entire country and points beyond. He was assassinated on February 12, 1949. It is said that when he was taken to the hospital, the physicians were under orders to let him bleed to death. He remains one of the most respected and inspirational figures of the Islamic movement.



King Faisal (1906–1975) – king of Saudi Arabia from 1964–1975, and the third son of the patriarch Ibn Saud. He established the country's first television station, formally abolished slavery, established the charter of the Muslim World League, and together with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan, formed the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). He continued the close alliance with the US that was initiated by his father, and relied exclusively on the US to train and arm Saudi military forces. He associated communism with Zionism, but apparently closed his eyes with regard to the relationship between imperialism and Zionism. He sided with Egypt in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and withdrew all Saudi oil from the world market in retaliation for Western support for Israel. This led to the 1973 energy crisis in the US and the West. He was assassinated on March 25, 1975 by his half-brother's son, Faisal ibn Musa'id, who had just returned from the US.



Liaquat Ali Khan (1896–1951) – first Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1947–1951. He was assassinated on October 16, 1951 by Saad Akbar Bab-

rak, an Afghan, shortly after he got back from the United States, where he had declared that Pakistan would remain neutral in the Cold War between the US and the USSR (Soviet Union). Police immediately killed the assassin and the motive was never discovered. After this, Pakistan went through a series of bouts between alternating military and civilian governments.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–1975) – secular leader of the Muslim Awami League (later to become simply the Awami League in order to be more inclusive of indigenous non-Muslims), which was the major political party in East Pakistan; led the independence movement for the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971. Jailed several times by the central government of Pakistan due to demands for justice and equity on behalf of the Bengali people, who were being mistreated by the Pakistani military, unofficially viewed as second-class citizens by the Pakistani government in West Pakistan, poorly represented in civil services, the police, and the military despite being a majority, and were not receiving proper allocations of tax revenues. After the tepid response of the Pakistani government to the floods of 1970, which killed thousands and displaced millions in East Pakistan, the desire for independence from West Pakistan became more acute. In 1975, as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, he declared a state of emergency, banned all opposition political parties, and became president for life. Although he was a secularist and socialist for most of his adult life, toward the end of his life, he started gradually paying attention to some Islamic social principles. To this end, he banned all gambling, the sale and production of liquor, and joined the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference), attending its first summit in Lahore, Pakistan in 1974. In 1975, seven months after he had declared martial law, he was assassinated along with most of his family in a military coup, launched by some high-ranking officers. Mujibur Rahman's daughter, who happened not to be in the country at the time of the assassination, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, is now the leader of the Awami League and current Prime Minister of Bangladesh (2009).



James Arbenz Guzman (1913–1971) – first popularly elected president of the Republic of Guatemala, ruling from 1951–1954. When he took over, 72% of the country's arable land was owned by 2% of the people, and only 12% of it was being cultivated. He immediately began a land reform program that was welcomed by the country's poor farmers, but was denounced by the landowning classes, powerful US cor-



porate interests, and the military, all of whom accused Arbenz of gravitating toward communism. In particular, United Fruit Company, the largest of all of Guatemala's landowners with 85% of its land uncultivated, sponsored a massive media campaign in the United States painting Arbenz as a rabid communist. This laid the groundwork for a US-sponsored military coup in Guatemala. Arbenz was forced to flee, seeking refuge in Mexico. How he died in his bathroom 16 years later is still open to question.

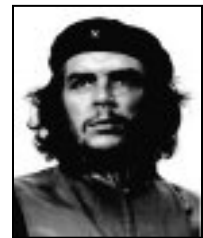
Jaime Roldos (1940–1981) – elected president of Ecuador from 1979–1981. He was killed when his military plane crashed in heavy rain near the Peruvian border. Many Ecuadorans claim he was eliminated by the CIA because he was against US proposals for oil exploration.

Salvador Allende (1908–1973) – elected president of the Republic of Chile from 1970–1973. Apparently committed suicide after the Chilean military took over in a coup on September 11, 1973. The Nixon administration in the US (during the early 1970s) regarded an Allende ascendancy to the presidency in Chile as a disaster for US business interests and spent \$10 million trying to ensure that he does not get elected to office.



When Allende took over, he nationalized many resources, especially copper, which incensed the US-owned copper mines. In 1968, US corporate holdings, mostly held by US copper corporations Anaconda and Kennecott, and telecommunications giant ITT, amounted to \$964 million. At the time ITT, which owned 70% of the Chilean national telephone company, offered the CIA \$1 million to aid in the defeat of Allende for the presidency.

Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1928–1967) – originally from Argentina, he was the archetypal Latin American revolutionary. Considered by some to be a modern-day Renaissance man, he was not only an intellectual, but also an author, physician, military commander, diplomat, and the guiding influence behind Castro's Cuban Revolution. He felt that the general state of inequality and degradation in Latin America and Africa were a direct result of colonialism, imperialism, and corporate capitalism. For this reason, he was involved



early on with some of the socialist reforms instituted by James Arbenz of Guatemala. Later he played a pivotal role in the guerilla overthrow of the US-backed Batista regime in Havana, Cuba. After serving as Cuba's national bank president and as a diplomat for Cuban socialism, he lent his services in 1965 to the Congolese revolutionary movement, and later to the same in Bolivia, where he was killed by CIA-backed Bolivian counter-revolutionaries.

Herbert Chitepo (1923–1975) – leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU); organized, planned, and carried out guerrilla attacks against the government of Rhodesia (before it was called Zimbabwe officially), starting in 1966. He was assassinated along with one of his bodyguards by a car bomb on March 18, 1975. The murder was traced to the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), headed at the time by Director General, Ken Flower, who was alleged to maintain loyalty to the British Crown, and who was believed to be an undercover MI6 (British intelligence agency) operative. It has been suggested that he is considered to be the “doublest of double agents” working simultaneously for several intelligence services including (primarily) MI6, the CIA, the KGB, and Mossad. Ken Flower later continued as the CIO head when Robert Mugabe became the first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in 1980.

Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961) – first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo after he helped the country win independence from Belgium in 1960; in office for less than three months in 1960. Lumumba’s government was deposed in a coup, and he was imprisoned and then murdered by a firing squad under the command of coup leader Tsimbe and Belgian advisers. Documents released 20 years after the murder indicate that both Belgian and US authorities not only earlier tried to kill Lumumba, but also had a hand in ultimately ordering his execution.



Fred Hampton (1948–1969) – civil rights activist in the United States and chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, an organization that promoted black power, self-defense (with weapons if necessary), and civil rights. In one year, under his leadership, the party established free clinics for the oppressed and distributed the party newspaper throughout Chicago. Before he was murdered by FBI death squads as part of the Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), he boldly said, “You can kill a revolutionary, but you can’t kill the revolution.”



John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) – 35th President of the United States (1961–1963); US Senator from 1953–1960 and the only president to win a Pulitzer Prize (for literature) for writing *Profiles in Courage* (1955); known for inaugurating the race to the Moon, for initiating the process of detente and arms reduction with the Soviet Union (USSR), and for his ability to effectively communicate. However, by far, he is most remembered for the mystery surrounding his assassination on November 22, 1963, by alleged killer Lee

Harvey Oswald, who himself was killed, before being tried, by Jack Ruby, a mob operative. Before the assassination in Dallas, Texas, Kennedy had threatened to destroy the CIA, overhaul the Federal Reserve System, reduce troop levels in Southeast Asia, and not support Israel's nuclear weapons program. Thus he had alienated powerful forces in the foreign intelligence community, the defense establishment, the corporate energy (oil and gas) and financial sector, as well as the Israeli security apparatus. He issued an executive order (No. 11110) to return power back to the US Treasury to issue currency instead of borrowing it on interest from the Federal Reserve. Further, in a conversation with then Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir (later to become Israeli Prime Minister), he indicated that US and Israeli interests would diverge if Israel continued to pursue the development of nuclear weapons.



Malcolm X (1925–1965) – African American human rights advocate; chief spokesperson for the Nation of Islam (1953–1963) and head of the OAAU (Organization of African American Unity) and the Muslim Mosque, Inc. (1963–1965); intellectual and social force behind the black power movement in the US; unrivaled in his ability to synthesize facts, history, current events, and public policy into a pointed social commentary against injustice, racism, and oppression in the world; one of the most gifted, committed, resolute, determined, and admired Muslims of the past 100 years. He suffered his first major trauma, at the age of eight, when his father was tied to train tracks by the Ku Klux Klan and run over by an oncoming train; he along with his brothers and sisters were all sent to foster homes, while his mother ended up in a ward for the insane. Outperforming everyone in his junior high school class, white students included, he was told he could become a shoe-shine boy or a train conductor. As a young man, he became a gambler, vigilante, drug dealer, and pimp; later he was caught and sent to prison where he became a Muslim, as a member of the Nation of Islam. He cleaned himself up, learning to read all over again by memorizing every word in the dictionary, which he used to read at night in his cell, by the crack of light that would shine from underneath the door. After his release from prison, he became the most passionate speaker for equal rights for the African American and criticized the hypocrisy of the white establishment in their second-class and discriminatory treatment of people of color. Through his influence and enduring energy, he was able to help establish some 150 mosques around the USA. As he was readying a case against the United States for domestic human rights violations, to be heard at the United



Nations, he was assassinated on February 21, 1965, apparently by members of the Nation of Islam, whom he had broken away from in 1963. Talmadge Hayer confessed to the murder and implicated four others who were never brought to trial. The CIA and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) are said to have been complicit in his assassination; during the 1950s and 1960s, the FBI was running a Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) directed at spying on indigenous African American movements in the US. About 10 years after the assassination, John Ali, then a national secretary of the Nation of Islam, was identified as an FBI undercover operative; Malcolm X had said that John Ali had created some antipathy between him and the leadership of the Nation. John Ali met with Talmadge Hayer on the night before the assassination.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) – Baptist minister; leader and spiritual icon of the US Civil Rights Movement; co-founder, in 1957, of the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference); led the March on Washington in 1963; youngest ever recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize; one of the most eloquent orators in recent US history. Heavily influenced by the teachings of Gandhi, King went to visit Gandhi’s family in 1959, and came back with a renewed vigor to pursue nonviolent resistance against the power establishment in Washington. He felt that granting African Americans legal equality would not narrow the economic disparity between them and the white social hierarchy; thus he argued for some form of reparations (\$50 billion over 10 years, distributed to the disadvantaged of all races) for past injustices related to slavery and marginalization from American social and economic vitality. He considered the government that was bombing Vietnam abroad was the same one that was humiliating and alienating African Americans at home; and characterized the US government as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.” The day before he was assassinated, he said “Justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice anywhere,” drawing a parallel between Vietnam and the domestic condition of segregation in the US. King was fatally shot in the balcony of his hotel room on April 4, 1968. James Earl Ray, the alleged assassin, was captured in London, England and extradited to Tennessee, where he confessed to the killing under duress. Later he withdrew the guilty plea, saying that his role was part of a greater conspiracy in which government agencies were involved. Ballistics tests on the rifle in question never proved conclusively that Ray was the murderer or that the rifle was in fact the murder weapon. Eyewitnesses also suggest that the sound of the shot came from another direction than was officially reported.



88 One week after 9/11, and for several weeks thereafter, the media-generated hysterical frenzy in the United States was given more fuel, keeping the anxiety level of a society already at the breaking point high. Letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to two US Democratic Senators and several media outlets, killing five and injuring 17. Immediately government operatives, especially those associated with the neoconservatives, began suggesting that this was a well-planned biological attack on the US by al-Qaeda and Iraq; and taking the cue, the media began displaying images of crop-dusting airplanes that could be used as delivery mechanisms for biological or chemical toxins over an entire city. People were afraid to open their mail for fear of being killed by biological toxins. In addition to 9/11, this began to prepare the country mentally for the declaration of war on the entire Muslim world, by so demonizing anyone associated with Islam or Muslims as a perpetual existential threat to the “American way of life” and “American values.” Every Muslim in the country began to be viewed as an agent of a foreign government, and many Muslims were not only mistreated, but many jailed, abused, and humiliated. The government milked the hysteria for everything it could and more, so that the people would be ready to come out and teach the enemy a lesson. As truth-minded investigators started looking into the nature of the spores, they began to discover that this was weapons-grade anthrax, and that only a very few places in the world could manufacture it, and that even fewer places had the technology to deliver it (in a warhead) with maximum destructive impact on a target population. These investigators reached a conclusion very early on that these spores could not have come from any third-world country; in fact, they suspected that the spores came right from US government military laboratories. At this point, some of these investigators, mostly microbiologists, mysteriously started turning up dead all along the east coast of the US (source: <http://911research.wtc7.net/post911/attacks/killings.html>). And just as suddenly as the threat had appeared after 9/11, it died and the media rarely mentioned it again until seven years later, when the anthrax spores were traced to a US Army biodefense laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland. If it can be believed, the FBI ended up blaming one person who was a career worker in government biodefense programs, Bruce Ivins. After the FBI haunted Ivins and his family for a few years, Ivins eventually committed suicide and the whole story died with him, never exposing the larger government superstructure, which not only thought up the idea and executed it, but also used it to plunge the nation into an unending war in the Middle East.

As for Arab and Muslim nuclear scientists ending up dead mysteriously, some stories indicated that Mossad have assassinated 350 Iraqi scientists since 2001. Look at the following articles:

Hassan Tahsin, *How Israel targets Arab, Muslim scientists*, (Brunei: Arab News, Brunei Times, February 24, 2007).

Yossi Melman, *Is Israel assassinating Iran nuclear scientists?* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Haaretz.com, February 17, 2009)

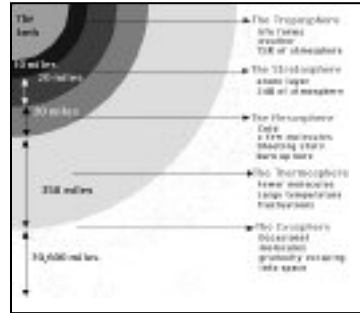
Patrick Henry Bellringer, *Mossad Assassinates Iraqi Scientists in Bomb Blasts*, (Fourwinds10.com, October 26, 2008).

- 89 Anas ibn Mālik has it on the authority of Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣīne who heard al-A'raj say,

ما أدركت الناس إلا وهم يلعنون الكفرة في رمضان

- 90 Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, Volume 1. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 50.

- 91 To the right is a graphical representation of the **Earth's atmosphere**; the ozone layer is located in the stratosphere. Typically, weather occurs in the troposphere, meteors burn up in the mesosphere, the aurora borealis occurs in the ionosphere, and satellites orbit in the exosphere.



- 92 **parsec** – a unit of length, used for distances beyond the Solar System. The term is a contraction of *parallax second*, and is the distance at which the astronomical unit (AU) subtends one second of arc; it equals 206,265 AU or 3.26 light years. (The *light year* is never used in professional astronomy.)

- 93 **cosmology** – the study of the universe on the largest scales of length and time, particularly the propounding of theories concerning the origin, nature, structure, and evolution of the universe. A cosmology is any model said to represent the observed universe. Western cosmology is “entirely” scientific in its approach, and has produced two famous models in modern times: the Big Bang and the steady state hypotheses. The study of the origin and mode of formation of various celestial objects is known as *cosmogony*.

- 94 The Greeks and Romans built galleys relying on oars for maneuverability and much of their propulsion; a square sail came into use when seamen and navigators figured out how to favorably use the wind. Roman merchant vessels 28–56m (90–180ft) long were propelled by a large square sail hung from a single mast, with a smaller sail mounted on a bowsprit to improve steering qualities; they were steered with two oars or sweeps mounted on the stern.

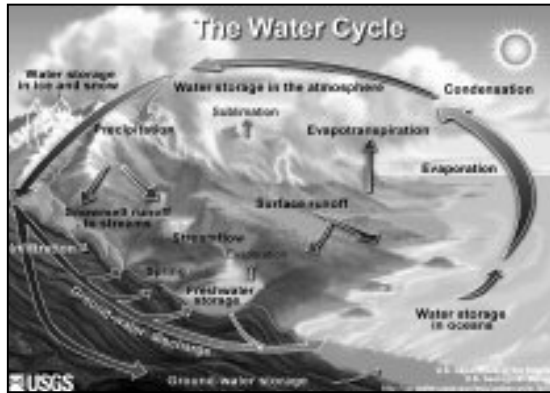
Viking ships, varying in length from 20–40m (70–120ft), were propelled by a large square-rigged sail and oars, and steered with a massive sweep hung over the starboard side. Almost five centuries ago the Portuguese developed the lateen-rigged caravel into a three- or four-masted ocean-going craft. Out of this grew the carrack, where lateen sails gradually gave way to square sails and the forecastle developed a pronounced overlap at the stern. The stern-mounted rudder appears to have come into use at about this time. In China, during this period (as early as 1371), ships of up to 1,500 tons were in use, including ironclads armed with canons.

In Europe, the square rig increased in complexity and refinement until the last decade of the 19th century. US influence dates from 1845, with the clipper ship. Their ships were generally larger than the British, and very often faster. The ultimate refinement in sail came with the British-built tea clippers, such as the *Cutty Sark*. These ships were immediately rendered obsolete by the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) because they could not navigate in this area of light and fickle winds.

About 200 years ago the first viable steamship, the *Charlotte Dundas*, was used as a tug on the Forth Clyde canal. The first steamship to cross the Atlantic was the US-built *Savannah*, but she only steamed for about three and a half days out of her 25 day passage, sailing for the rest of the time. The first continuous steam crossing of the Atlantic was achieved by the British-owned packet vessel, the 700-ton *Sirius*, in 1838. Brunel's *Great Britain* (1844) was the first screw-propelled, double-bottomed, iron-hulled transatlantic passenger ship. High pressure steam in 1860 heralded the end of the sailing ship's supremacy. Steam turbines were demonstrated at the *Spithead Review* in 1897, and powered the *Mauretania* when she took the *Blue Riband* in 1907. The diesel engine, patented in 1892, won ocean-going acceptance in the 5,000-ton *Selandia* in 1912; but these engines, though cheaper to run and occupying less space, could not provide the power nor the reliability needed for passenger vessels until the late 1970s. In 1968 the *Queen Elizabeth 2* was built with steam turbines, but in 1987 she was re-engined using diesel-electric propulsion, gaining power and speed with lower fuel costs. (In 1991, only 2.8% of the world's ships were steam-powered, but this represented 16.8% of the world's tonnage.)

Nuclear-fuelled vessels provide an alternative means of generating heat to provide steam to drive turbines. This method is used in government vessels such as ice-breakers, aircraft carriers, and missile carrying submarines, but it has proved to be uneconomical for merchant vessels. When fully laden they displace 600,000 tons of steam at a relatively modest speed of 15 knots. Future developments may see no great overall increase in ship size, but more than likely there will be faster container ships and many large cruise ships, all diesel-engined (a *knot* is a unit of velocity equal to one nautical mile or about 1.15 statute miles per hour)

95 All the water that has been on the Earth since its creation is still here, billions of years later. It moves from the earth to the air and back to the earth again through a process called the **water cycle**. Rivers, lakes and oceans lose water everyday because of *evaporation*. That water



travels into the air as water vapor and becomes part of a cloud. Through *condensation*, the water vapor in the clouds becomes a liquid — such as rain, snow, or sleet — or *precipitation*. The water then comes back to the earth and the process begins all over again. Not all precipitation falls into bodies of water. Some rain falls on the ground where it may seep through the soil through a process called *percolation*. The water eventually reaches underground streams and becomes part of the groundwater system. The water cycle keeps water moving — from earth to air and back to earth; and keeps water changing — from liquid (rain, river water, groundwater) to gas (water vapor) and even to solid (snow and sleet); source:

http://www.commwater.com/water_cycle.htm.

96 **Coriolis force** – a force exerted on a parcel of air (or any moving body) due to the rotation of the earth. This force causes a deflection of the body to the right in the northern hemisphere and to the left in the southern hemisphere. In the weather, for instance, the earth’s rotation affects fluids like the oceans and the atmosphere, causing hurricanes and whirlpools to spin in a certain direction around a nucleus or “eye.”

97 **Geostrophic wind** – a wind which blows parallel to isobars, a line on a weather map joining places of equal barometric pressure. Because of variations in barometric pressure with altitude, recordings from different elevations are corrected and adjusted to pressure at sea level. The closer the lines are together, the stronger the pressure gradient force, and therefore the stronger the winds. It represents the balanced motion between the equal but opposing pressure gradient force and Coriolis force. It is found only in the upper atmosphere, where the frictional force of the Earth’s surface is absent.

98 **Bilderberg** – founded in 1954 by the Polish *emince grise* Joseph Retinger, working for MI6, and funded by the CIA. For almost 30 years Bilderberg was

simply not reported on by the major Anglo-American media. One British journalist, Gordon Tether, who tried to write about the group in his column in the *Financial Times* (*FT*), could not have his columns published in the paper, eventually lost his job after 20 years at the *FT*, and ended up publishing the columns which the *FT* had refused to print, including three on Bilderberg, in a little pamphlet.

Although the major media on both sides of the Atlantic have continued by and large to accept the Bilderberg's requests for secrecy, the group has been reported on in the USA in a weekly called *The Spotlight*, now known as *American Free Press*. Those who attend the yearly secret meetings of the Bilderberg are the very influential global individuals in politics, finances, the media, and academia.

Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) – in the beginning (1908–1920) Cecil Rhodes' money created the Round Table groups in the British Commonwealth, the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House) in London, the Council for Foreign Relations (CFR) in the USA, and the various branches of the Institute of Pacific Affairs. These events took place when Britain was till top dog in the world and this network of what would now be called think tanks and political action groups tried to formulate and implement foreign policies which would (a) benefit Britain and America, and (b) move the world in the direction Rhodes sought, towards an Anglo-American dominated commonwealth of nations. (The term *commonwealth* came from the Round Table people).

By the end of WWII, when the US had supplanted the UK as the world's leading imperial power, the British dominance of this network came to an end. During the war the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) planned the expansion of the US empire in the post-war years without discussing it with its UK counterpart. Although allies with Britain in the war against the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan), elements of American business and the government spent the war planning how to get their hands on the colonial properties of the British Empire and its European partners.

The CFR has dominated the ranks of the US foreign service for most of the post-war period. Virtually all the foreign policy managers of America in the post-WWII have been members of the CFR.

The Trilateral Commission – the role of elite management groups, such as the Trilateral Commission and Bilderberg Group, is one of the strands in the behind-the-scenes decision making process. When Jimmy Carter, hitherto an obscure southern governor, appeared as a front-runner in the race for the 1976 US presidency, sections of the American left became interested in the role of the Trilateral Commission, of which he had been a member. This brief flurry of interest led to the 1980 book *Trilateralism*, still the best single volume on the elite management groups.

Bill Clinton was also another obscure southern governor until being adopted by the Trilateral Commission. One of the roles of the Trilateral Commission in the United States — like the Bilderberg Group in Europe — is to assess politicians and promote those deemed acceptable by the corporate managers.

Skull and Bones – first established among the class graduating from Yale University in 1833. Its founder was a William Huntington Russell of Middletown, Connecticut. The Russell family was the master of incalculable wealth derived from the largest US criminal organization of the 19th century: Russell and Company, the great opium syndicate. Members of the secret order are graduates of Yale University.

Committee of 300 – in 1909, Walter Rathenau of General Electric in Germany, said that three hundred men, all of whom know one another, direct the economic destiny of Europe and choose their successors from among themselves. Rathenau's figure may have provided the basis for some who say that a committee of 300 controls a secret upper-level parallel government that runs Britain and the USA. Some people today believe that these same small groups of men and women along with friends and associates not only manipulate many of the major world issues but also control the major tax-exempt foundations. These people connect with each other through a variety of means — international business and politics, conferences, social gatherings, foundations, etc. — and therefore constitute a cohesive group. This group has been called by some investigators: the New World Order, the Committee of 300, the Illuminati, the Secret Brotherhood, or often simply “they.”

- 99 **The Race Relations Act of 1976** – British Act of Parliament. It repealed the Acts of 1965 and 1968, strengthened the law on racial discrimination, and extended the 1968 ban on discrimination to housing, employment, insurance, and credit facilities. The Act also established (1977) a permanent Race Relations Commission to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups within Britain, which by then had become a multiracial society, with the immigration of large numbers of Asians and West Indians (source: encyclopedia.com, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1048-RaceRelationsAct.html>).

- 100 **Cornel West** (1953–present) – the son of a preacher, he is an American philosopher, writer, and civil rights advocate; currently he serves as a professor at Princeton University in the Center of African American studies and in the religion department. Most of his thought deals with issues of race, class, and gender in American society and how people react and behave

according to their societal conditioning. He characterized then president of Harvard University and now President Obama's top economic adviser, Lawrence Summers, as the Ariel Sharon of higher education, after Summers put pressure on West to publish more, while he was a professor at Harvard. West argued that "Summers' vision of academia is corrosive to a deep democratic commitment that strives to interconnect the academy with society at large, so as to fulfill its calling to educate the public." He contended that the controversy with Summers was indicative of the fact that "a market-driven technocratic culture has infiltrated university life, with the narrow pursuit of academic trophies and the business of generating income from grants and business partnerships taking precedence over the fundamental responsibility of nurturing young minds." His major published works include *Black Theology and Marxist Thought* (1979), *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (1991), *Jews and Blacks: A Dialogue on Race, Religion, and Culture in America* (1995), and *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (2004).



Paul Gilroy (1956–present) – professor at the London School of Economics. He is a commentator on the politics of race, nation, and racism in the UK and a pacesetter in shaping the cultural and political movement of people of African origin who are indigenous to the UK. Some of his major published works are *The Empire Strikes Back — Race and Racism in '70s Britain* (1982), *There Ain't No Black In the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (2000), *Between Camps: Nations, Culture and the Allure of Race* (2000), and *After Empire: Multiculture or Postcolonial Melancholia* (2004).



101 **al-sā'ibah** – During pre-Islamic times this she-camel would be left alone (on its own), because of its owner's vow which would in most cases take place after it gave birth to ten female camels. The "laws" of that society rendered that camel free: no longer to be ridden or used. Its milk was for its newly-born or for a guest. It could not be slaughtered for food. It could only be eaten after it died of its own causes. The last born of its she-camels is called a *bahīrah*.

102 AMI Fact Sheet: *U.S. Meat and Poultry Production & Consumption: An Overview*, (Washington, DC: American Meat Institute, March 2007), p. 2.
<http://www.meatami.com/ht/a/GetDocumentAction/i/1239>

103 **Protozoa** – a diverse group of unicellular microorganisms found free-living, as consumers of organic matter, in all kinds of habitats, and as parasites or associates of other organisms; typically possess a single nucleus, sometimes two or more; usually reproduce by splitting in two (binary fission), but sexual reproductive processes are also known to occur; includes many disease causing organisms.

104 **Salmonellosis** – the bacterium *salmonella* can contaminate raw or undercooked beef or poultry and foods coming into contact with it or its juices, as well as raw or undercooked eggs. Since *salmonella* is spread by fecal contamination, inadequate hygiene by food handlers increases the risk. Symptoms (nausea, vomiting, cramps, chills) usually begin within 12–48 hours. Salmonellosis can be fatal to children, elderly persons and those with low immunity.

Shigellosis – the bacterium *Shigella* can contaminate foods handled by an infected person with poor hygiene, or foods undercooked or stored at room temperature. Symptoms (nausea, bloody stools) appear in one to seven days. Shigellosis can be serious in elderly people, infants, and those with lowered immunity.

Infectious hepatitis (type A) – the hepatitis virus type A can contaminate food handled by infected food handlers and shellfish contaminated by raw sewage. Symptoms (jaundice, liver damage) appear in 15–50 days. This disease can be fatal.

Escherichia coli O157:H7 – can cause hemorrhagic colitis and hemolytic uremia syndrome. This strain of *E. coli* is linked to contaminated raw or undercooked meat and to contaminated milk. Symptoms include bloody diarrhea, severe abdominal cramping and kidney damage. The disease can cause permanent kidney damage and death in young children.

Staphylococcal food poisoning – the bacterium *Staphylococcus* contaminates food that has been handled under unsanitary conditions and by infected food handlers, especially those with skin infections. It may be present in foods like potato or tuna salad. Symptoms (nausea, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, vomiting) can begin in one to eight hours.

Parahemolytic food poisoning – species of the bacterium *Vibrio* may contaminate fish and shellfish exposed to raw sewage. Symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, headache, chills, bloody stools) can begin in 15–24 hours.

Viral gastroenteritis – intestinal viruses (rotaviruses, enteroviruses, norwalk virus, parvovirus) can contaminate foods processed by infected food han-

dlers. These viruses also occur in shellfish contaminated by raw sewage. Symptoms (vomiting, nausea, diarrhea) occur in 12–48 hours.

Campylobacteriosis – the bacterium *Campylobacter* can contaminate meat and poultry and, by fecal exposure, meat in packing plants. Typical sources are undercooked or raw beef, poultry, shellfish, and untreated water. Symptoms (fever, diarrhea, bloody stools, cramps) can begin within two to five days.

Perfringens food poisoning – the bacterium *Clostridium perfringens* can contaminate foods that are slowly cooled or held at room temperature too long. Typically these are meat and poultry dishes that are covered or wrapped with limited exposure to air. Symptoms (diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting) are usually mild and begin in 8–24 hours.

Botulism – the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* can contaminate improperly cooked low-acid foods, like green beans or corn, that are home cooked. It can grow in potatoes covered with butter or oil and left at room temperature for too long a period. This bacterium produces an extremely powerful nerve toxin that causes double vision, difficult breathing and, in extreme cases, death. Symptoms begin in 8–36 hours.

Worms – occur in fish (clonorchiasis, opisthochiasis) and pork (trichinosis, cysticercosis, balantidiasis), among others.

105 **Growth promoters as meat contaminants** – hormones and growth promoters are often given to animals to speed weight gain; occasionally these are misused. Steroid growth promoters can increase the risk of cancer. Diethylstilbestrol (DES) is an example of hormone-like drug once used to promote growth in beef. It is now banned in the United States, though residues occasionally show up in spot checks of meat. The degree of risk of long-term exposure to low levels of hormone analogs and other drugs in meat is unknown.

Antibiotics as meat contaminants – antibiotics are used as feed additives promoting growth in livestock, which is a boon to livestock growers. However, their use in feed can lead to drug-resistant bacteria, which theoretically could infect people who eat the contaminated meat or dairy products. Antibiotic residues may contaminate meat. As an example, sulfamethazine, a sulfa drug used to treat bacterial infections in cattle, pigs, sheep, and poultry, is used as a growth promoter for pigs. Research indicates it causes cancer in lab animals. This drug cannot be given to livestock close to the time of slaughter and cannot be given to milk cows because it is a for-

bidden contaminant in milk. Nonetheless, there may be significant meat and milk contamination; spot checks have found sulfa drugs in veal and pork and milk from various metropolitan areas in the United States.

Pesticides as meat contaminants – livestock are generally contaminated with trace amounts of a variety of pesticides. Fortunately, the levels are generally very low. Cow's milk is likewise contaminated. Herbicide contamination occurs when animals graze on land contaminated with dioxin-containing herbicides (such as Silvet and 2-4-5T).

Thyroid gland contamination – occasionally meat is contaminated by thyroid glands from carcasses improperly trimmed by meat packers. This could be a problem for patients with heart disease. Symptoms (insomnia, diarrhea, nervousness) disappear when the contaminated meat is no longer eaten.

Animal drugs as meat contaminants – drugs like *clorsulon* administered to prevent liver flukes in cattle are potential cancer-causing agents. *Gentian violet* causes cancer, but it is still permitted in animal feed to prevent if from molding. Traces of these chemicals show up in meat, eggs, and poultry.

- 106 Robert A. Ronzio (editor), *The Encyclopedia of Good Health and Nutrition*. (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997), pp.286–90.
- 107 Richard Hanson, *Blossoms over beef: The ban remains the same*, (Hong Kong: Asia Times online, April 6, 2004).
- 108 Grand Chief Stewart Phillip et al., *Zero Tolerance: Indian Salmon Don't Do Drugs*, (British Columbia, Canada: Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, 1998). <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/Resources/fishfarmpaper.htm>
- 109 Bluepanjeet (pseudonym), *Avoid buying all Processed foods from China*, (On the Wings of My Dreams (blog): March 28, 2008). <http://bluepanjeet.net/2008/03/28/899/avoid-buying-all-processed-foods-from-china/>
- 110 **Botulism (*botulinus* poisoning)** – a rare though deadly form of food poisoning due to ingestion of a toxin produced by the anaerobic soil bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Several strains of *Clostridium botulinum* produce one of the most deadly natural toxins. It is estimated that a few micrograms of the toxin could kill an adult. *Botulinum* toxins are neurotoxins, nerve poisons, which explain symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, sudden weakness and difficulty in breathing, speaking, and swallowing; blurred vision; and headache. Paralysis and death can occur in 2–10 days. Early detection is a

critical factor to assure timely treatment with *botulinum* antitoxin.

Infant botulism was first recognized in the US in 1976, and it is now the most common form of botulism. In susceptible infants, the *botulinum* bacterium can propagate before the development of normal intestinal flora that would inhibit it.

Botulism is becoming more common with the use of microwave cooking, which may not sterilize food completely. Botulism is usually associated with canned food, especially improperly home-canned non-acidic vegetables, such as string beans, sweet corn, beets, asparagus, spinach, and chard. Toxin production is favored when contaminated food is stored at neutral or slightly alkaline pH at room temperature for 12–24 hours away from moving air, and then not reheated before serving. Improperly stored restaurant foods (potato salad, pot pies, stews, turkey loaf, preserved meat, fish, and milk), have been reported as causes of outbreaks of botulism. Low-acid foods that are not canned, such as salami and other processed meats, depend upon a combination of treatments to inhibit germination of *Clostridium botulinum* spores and bacterial growth: mild heat treatment, the addition of sodium nitrite and other additives; and refrigeration.

111 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar and recorded in the hadith collection of Ibn al-Qayyim.

أحلت لنا ميتتان ودمان الحوت والجراد والكبد والطحال

112 On the authority of Abū Tha‘labah al-Khashanī and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نهى عن أكل كل ذي ناب من السباع .

113 Narrated by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in the *sunan* of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī.

نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن أكل كل ذي ناب من السباع . وذي مخلب من الطير

114 On the authority of Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh and recorded in al-Bukhārī.

نهى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يوم خيبر عن لحوم الحمير . ورحص في لحوم الخيل .

115 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1411AH), p. 82.

116 Ibid., p. 82.

117 On the authority of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbas, and recorded in al-Bukhārī.

أن خالد بن الوليد . الذي يقال له سيف الله . أخيره : أنه دخل مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على ميمونة . وهي خالته وخالة ابن عباس . فوجد عندهما ضيا محنودا . قدمت به أختها حفيدة بنت الحارث من نجد . فقدمت الضب لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم . وكان قلما يقدم يده لطعام حتى يحدث به ويسمى له . فأهوى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يده إلى الضب . فقالت امرأة من النسوة الحضور : أخبرن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ما قدمت له . هو الضب يا رسول الله . فرفع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يده عن الضب . فقال خالد بن الوليد : أحرام الضب يا رسول الله ؟ قال : (لا) . ولكن لم يكن بأرض قومي . فأجذني أعافه) . قال خالد : فاجترته فأكلته . ورسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ينظر إلي .

118 From Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh, and recorded in the *sunan* of Abū Dāwūd.

ذكاة الجنين ذكاة أمه

119 **Egyptian Bread Riots (1977)** – took place on January 17–18, 1977 in response to World Bank and IMF-mandated termination of state subsidies on basic food staples such as rice, flour, and cooking oil. The policy was a result of conditions on World Bank loans that the Egyptian government was applying for in order to relieve its foreign debt burden. As many as 800 people were killed, and the riots only ended when the Egyptian government, under pressure from its own people, cancelled the new policies. Almost the same exact thing is going on today (2009) with the forced starvation of the Palestinians in Ghazzah (Gaza); however few Egyptians are protesting either the Rafah crossing blockade or the embargo of basic necessities for the Palestinians by the Israelis.

120 **G8 countries** – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

121 Bank Information Center et al., *How the World Bank's Energy Framework Sells the Climate and Poor People Short: A Civil Society Response to the World Bank's Investment Framework for Clean Energy and Development*. (Washington, DC: Bank Information Center, September 2006).

122 Daphne Wysham, Tom Paine, *Chad: World Bank OK With Blood For Oil*. (San Francisco: CorpWatch, Holding Corporations Accountable, January 5, 2007). <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=14358>

123 Chossudovsky, Michel, *The War on Lebanon and the Battle for Oil*. (Global Research.ca: Center for Research on Globalization, July 26, 2006). <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=CHO20060726&articleId=2824>

124 This refers to an unprovoked Israeli air strike on an alleged Syrian nuclear facility on September 6, 2007. The United States claimed that it had satel-

lite images of a pilot nuclear reactor under construction in an area close to the Turkish border, about 160km north of the Syrian city of Rakka. The only countries that brought the case up at the United Nations were North Korea and Syria; the rest of the world including Turkey did not even pay attention to the Israeli aggression. Initially both Israel and the US were quiet about the incident, saying initially that the Israelis were targeting arms caches given to the Syrians by the Iranian government. About a month later, they both began to float stories about how the North Koreans were cooperating with the Syrians in building a pilot uranium enrichment facility. So far, no hard evidence of uranium enrichment has been recovered, even by IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) inspectors. For more information about the build-up of the aftermath of the air strike, look at the following: Gareth Porter, *Israel's Syrian Air Strike Was Aimed at Iran*, (Washington, DC: Antiwar.com, November 20, 2007).

<http://www.antiwar.com/porter/?articleid=11935>

125 Refers to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. According to the Israelis and Americans, Hizbullah was accused of kidnapping two Israeli soldiers who were in Israeli territory (it has been confirmed that both of these soldiers were conducting intelligence activity on the Lebanese side of the border). And because of this Israel launched a 32-day war with the objective of eliminating and destroying Hizbullah altogether. The United States could have stopped the war from the first day, but chose not to bring up the case at the United Nations because it too wanted Israel to destroy Hizbullah. However, for the second time, Hizbullah was not only able to hold on to Lebanese territory, but it delivered a shocking blow to the Israeli military. Most military experts agree that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were defeated by the comparably lightly armed Hizbullah fighters. Israel killed over a thousand Lebanese, displaced as many as a million from their homes, severely damaged Lebanese civilian infrastructure, and made some parts of Southern Lebanon uninhabitable because of unexploded cluster bomb shells.

126 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 100.

127 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 101.

128 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 101.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) – known as Doctor Angelicus. Scholastic theologian, born in the castle of Roccasecca, Italy, of the family of the

Counts of Aquino. He was educated by the Benedictines of Monte-Cassino, and at Naples. Against the will of his family, he entered the Dominican order (1243), but his brothers abducted him, keeping him a prisoner in the paternal castle for two years. Escaping to Cologne, he became a pupil of Albertus Magnus, and in turn was himself appointed to teach (1248). He began to publish commentaries on Aristotle, and went to Paris (1252), where he obtained great distinction as a philosophic theologian. In 1258, he was summoned by the Pope to teach successively in Anagni, Orvieto, and Rome. He died on his way to a General Council in Lyon, and was canonized in 1323. He was the first among 13th century metaphysicians to stress the importance of sense perception and the experimental foundation of human knowledge. His *Summa theologiae*, the first attempt at a complete theological system, remains substantially the standard authority in the Roman Catholic Church. His only scholastic rival was Duns Scotus, the “subtle doctor,” whose followers were the Fransiscans. Thereafter medieval theologians were divided into two schools, Scotists and Thomists, whose differences permeated almost every branch of doctrine.



129 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God, He made man” (Genesis, 9:6, New King James Version).

130 Exodus, 21:15–29; 22:18–20.

Leviticus, 20:10, 27.

Deuteronomy, 21:18–21; 22:21.

131 **positive law** – the set of laws created by human beings for the governance of an organized civil society; as opposed to and often in contradiction with the natural law, or the law of God. Since God and man both make laws, the distinction is between the laws of God and those of human societies made by political superiors who consider themselves to rival God’s ultimate authority. Examples in our world of positive law includes those that legalize institutional *ribā*, gambling, adultery, and the exclusion of God from political workings of government and representation. In the Muslim world, examples of positive law are the legal support for the institution of monarchy and the ownership of energy resources by a single individual or family.

132 **Immanuel Kant** (1724–1804) – German philosopher and one of the most influential figures of the Enlightenment. He made contributions to the theory of knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics, influencing the development of Idealism and Positivism. He developed the concepts of transcendental logic, the categorical imperative, and moral autonomy of the individual. His major

works include *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of Judgment*, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, and *Perpetual Peace*.

133 *World Prison Brief*, International Centre for Prison Studies. (London: Kings College, February 4, 2008).
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/law/research/icps/worldbrief/>

Iran Human Rights. (New York: Amnesty International, 2009).
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/all-countries/iran/page.do?id=1011172>

134 *Dirhams* were the silver currency and *dīnārs* the gold currency at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). *Dīnārs* have also been defined according to the weight in gold or barley beads, with definitions ranging from 60 to 75 barley beads. It is also said that a *dīnār* is the equivalent weight of 71.5 barley beads.

135 Price of an ounce of gold on March 1, 2009.

136 Narrated by Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī and recorded in the *sunan* of Abū Dāwūd.

إن الله قد أعطى كل ذي حق حقه فلا وصية لوارث

137 From Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh, and recorded by Muslim and al-Tirmidhī.

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خرج عام الفتح إلى مكة في رمضان . فصام حتى بلغ كراع الغميم . فصام الناس . ثم دعا بقدرح من ماء فرفعه . حتى نظر الناس إليه . ثم شرب . فقبل له بعد ذلك : إن بعض الناس قد صام . فقال : " أولئك العصاة . أولئك العصاة " . وفي رواية : إن الناس قد شق عليهم الصيام . وإنما ينظرون فيما فعلت . فدعا بقدرح من ماء بعد العصر .

138 From Anas ibn Mālik and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Nisā’ī.

كنا مع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في السفر . فمننا الصائم ومننا المفطر . قال : فنزلنا منزلاً في يوم حار . أكثرنا ظلاً صاحب الكساء ومننا من يتقي الشمس بيده . قال : فسقط الصوم . وقام المفطرون فضربوا الأبنية وسقوا الركاب . فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم " ذهب المفطرون اليوم بالأجر " .

139 From Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh, and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Anas ibn Mālik, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nisā’ī.

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في سفره . فرأى رجلاً قد اجتمع الناس عليه . وقد ضل عليه . فقال : " ماله ؟ " قالوا : رجل صائم . فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : " ليس من البر أن تصوموا في السفر " .

140 From Abū Umayyah al-Ḍumarī, and recorded by al-Nisā’ī.

قدمت على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال : ألا تنتظر الغداة . قلت : إني صائم . فقال : تعال أخبرك عن المسافرين : إن الله وضع عنه الصيام ونصف الصلاة

- 141 From Anas ibn Mālik, and presented by all the narrators of hadith.
 ...إن الله تعالى وضع شطر الصلاة أو نصف الصلاة والصوم عن المسافرين وعن المرضع أو الحبلى والله لقد قالهما جميعا أو أحدهما قال فتلهفت نفسي أن لا أكون أكلت من طعام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم
- 142 From 'Ā'ishah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Anas ibn Mālik, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nisa'i.
 سأل حمزة ابن عمرو الأسلمي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : عن الصيام في السفر؟ فقال . " إن شئت فصم . وإن شئت فأفطر " .
- 143 From Anas ibn Mālik, and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Abū Dāwūd.
 سافرنا مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فمنا الصائم ومنا المفطر ومنا المقصر . فلم يعب واحد منا على صاحبه
- 144 From Abū Dardā', and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Abū Dāwūd.
 خرجنا مع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في بعض أسفاره في يوم حار . حتى يضع الرجل يده على رأسه من شدة الحر . وما فينا صائم إلا ما كان من النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وابن رواحة .
- 145 From Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
 نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن الوصال . فقال رجل من المسلمين : فإنك . يا رسول الله ! تواصل ! قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : " وأيكم مثلي ؟ إنني أبيت بطعمني ربي ويسقيني " .
- 146 From Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by Muslim.
 أقرب ما يكون العبد من ربه وهو ساجد ...
- 147 Narrated by Salmān al-Fārsī and located in the *sunan* of al-Tirmidhī.
 يا أيها الناس إن ربكم حيي كريم يستحي أن يعد أحدكم يديه إليه فيردهما خائبين
- 148 Narrated by 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit, and recorded by Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah.
 ما على الأرض مسلم يدعو الله تعالى بدعوة إلا آتاه الله إياها أو صرف عنه من السوء مثلها ما لم يدع بمأثم أو قطيعة رحم...
- 149 From Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
 يستجاب لأحدكم ما لم يعجل . يقول: دعوت فلم يستجب لي

150 From Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by Muslim.

لا يزال يستجاب للعبد ما لم يدع بإثم أو قطيعة رحم، ما لم يستعجل . قيل: يا رسول الله! ما الاستعجال؟ قال يقول: قد دعوت . وقد دعوت . فلم أر يستجيب لي . فيستحسر عند ذلك . ويدع الدعاء

151 From ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar and recorded by Abū Dāwūd.

لكل صائم عند فطره دعوة مستجابة

152 From ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, and recorded by Ibn Mājah.

إن للصائم عند فطره دعوة ما ترد

153 From Abū Hurayrah, and recorded in the sunan of Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nisā’ī, Ibn Mājah.

ثلاثة لا ترد دعوتهم: الإمام العادل . والصائم حتى يفطر . ودعوة المظلوم يرفعها الله دون الغمام يوم القيامة . ويفتح لها أبواب السماء . ويقول : بعزتي لأنصرنك ولو بعد حين

154 From Samurah ibn Jandab, and recorded by Muslim.

لا يغرركم نداء بلال . ولا هذا البياض حتى يبدو الفجر (أو قال) حتى ينفجر الفجر

155 From Samurah ibn Jandab, and recorded by al-Albānī.

لا يمنعكم من سحوركم أذان بلال . ولا الفجر المستطيل . ولكنه الفجر المستطير في الأفق

156 **Lent** – the 40 days, immediately preceding Easter, that the Church has set aside as a time of fasting and penance, and as preparation for the festival of Easter. It commemorates the fast of Christ in the desert to which he had retired to prepare himself for the arduous labors of his public life. Lent is so old an institution that it dates back almost to the time of the Apostles themselves. Up to the year 846 it began with the first Sunday in Lent, thus making 36 days of fasting (Sundays were excepted.) As 36 days formed one tenth of the year, it was claimed that the Christians rendered penitential tithes of their lives to God. The Council of Meaux in 846 added Ash Wednesday and the other three days before Sunday in Lent and made them part of the fasting season (this is how man ritualizes and legalizes for himself). The custom soon became universal.

Fridays of Advent – in the Christian Church, a period of penitence and preparation for the celebration of the first coming of Christ at Christmas, and for his promised second coming to judge the world. It begins on Advent

Sunday, the fourth Sunday before Christmas (in effect, the Sunday nearest the 30th of November).

Ember Days – Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) ordered the present arrangement of ember days. They are to be observed each year on the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after December 13th (the Feast of St. Lucy), after the first Sunday in Lent, after Pentecost, and after September 14th (the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross). This custom of fasting and abstaining four times in the year certainly dates back to the time of St. Augustine (end of fourth century). They are always fast and abstinence days, and their object is to purify men's souls with penance and mortification so that they might be enabled to begin each quarter of the year well.

Pentecost – in the Jewish law, there was a feast known by this name. This celebration, also known as the Feast of Weeks, was kept 50 days after the offering of the Wavesheaf (ancient Jewish custom to inaugurate the spring harvest season, where the first sheaf of grain would be waved to be accepted by God), and lasted but one day. It usually took place about the eighth day of the third month (Sivan). Burnt offerings were sacrificed, together with the waving of the two loaves of wheat flour, not unleavened but leavened. In Mosaic times it marked the end of the corn harvest, and in later times was kept as a reminder of the giving of the law.

On this day in Christian history, the holy ghost descended upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues. Consequently, since the days of the Apostles, it has been observed as a special feast. It is so highly regarded, for it really marks the birthday of the Church, that no other feast is allowed to be celebrated on that day. The custom of various peoples in relation to this day attests to the their level of veneration for it. In England, it was especially a time of merrymaking, for then the horse races and the Whitsun Ales were held during which Whitsun plays were performed. The Italians were wont to scatter rose leaves from the ceiling of the churches to recall the miracle of the fiery tongues. In France, trumpets were blown during divine service, an echo of the great wind that shook the house in which the Apostles were gathered when the holy ghost descended upon them. Even to this day, the Russians carry flowers and green branches in their hands in memory of the feast. In the Oriental Churches, the Vesper services are held with peculiar solemnity, with the long genuflexion and lengthy recitation of poetical prayers and psalms. The old English name for Pentecost is Whitsunday.

157 Reverend Joseph L. Weidenhan, STL, *The Catholic Dictionary for the Catholic Laity*. (Baltimore, Maryland: J.H. Furst Company, 1916).

STL – Licentiate of Sacred Theology; like a Master's degree, except that it is issued by the Catholic Church

- 158 Robert A. Ronzio (editor), *The Encyclopedia of Good Health and Nutrition*. (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997), pp. 165–168.
- 159 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, and recorded by al-Safārīnī al-Ḥanbalī.
الصيام نصف الصبر...
- 160 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Imam Aḥmad, and others.
من صام رمضان إيماناً واحتساباً غفر له ما تقدم من ذنبه . ومن قام ليلة القدر إيماناً واحتساباً غفر له ما تقدم من ذنبه
- 161 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and others.
يقول الله عز وجل : الصوم لي وأنا أجزى به . يدع شهوته وأكله وشربه من أجلي . والصوم جنة . وللصائم فرحتان: فرحة حين يفطر . وفرحة حين يلقى ربه . وخالوف فم الصائم أطيب عند الله من ريح المسك
- 162 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī.
كل عمل ابن آدم له إلا الصوم . فإنه لي وأنا أجزى به...
- 163 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Imam Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah.
من لم يدع قول الزور والعمل به . فليس لله حاجة في أن يدع طعامه وشرابه .
- 164 From Salmān al-Fārisī, and recorded by Ḍiyā’ al-Muqaddasī.
... وهو شهر أوله رحمة وأوسطه مغفرة وآخره عتق من النار ...
- 165 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Nisā’ī and Ibn Mājah.
رب قائم ليس له من قيامه إلا السهر ورب صائم ليس له من صومه إلا الجوع والعطش
- 166 Lou Dobbs, *Lobbying against America*. (CNN.com, International Edition, August 12, 2005).
<http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/08/11/lobby.america/index.html>
- 167 *United States Budget for FY 2008*. (Washington, DC: Office of Management and Budget, 2008).
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2008/budget.html>

168 *Pro-Israel PAC Contributions to 2008 Congressional Candidates*. (Washington, DC: Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, November 2008), pp. 27–30. http://www.wrmea.com/archives/November_2008/pdfs/nov08pac-charts.pdf

169 **Cynthia McKinney** (1955–present) – two-time member of the US House of Representatives, as a Democrat, from 1993–2003 and 2005–2007; and the Green Party candidate for president of the United States in 2008. She gained national attention when she criticized the George W. Bush administration for having foreknowledge of the 9/11 incident, and for being a vociferous advocate of not going to war against Iraq in 2003. For this reason, and an AIPAC-managed campaign against her, she lost her House seat in 2004; however, she challenged AIPAC and the neoconservatives and won her seat back in 2005. Because the Democratic Party was not materially different from the Republican Party, especially with regard to the war in Iraq, she withdrew from the Democratic party in 2007. She has been a vocal critic of Israeli policies, was one of the only US elected officials who made a trip to Ghazzah (Gaza) after the Israeli bombing campaign came to an end in 2009, and advocated the impeachment of US President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Paul Findley (1921–present) – member of the United States Senate, as a Republican, from 1961–1982. He lost his seat because of his criticism of Israeli policies and power of influence in the United States government. He refers to AIPAC as the “700 lb. gorilla in Washington.” He is one of the few elected US representatives, past or present, who has said that the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was aimed at guaranteeing the security of Israel. Books



he has written include *Silent No More: Confronting America's False Images of Islam* (2001), *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby* (1985), and *Deliberate Deceptions: Facing the Facts About the U.S.-Israeli Relationship* (1983).

170 To show the long-standing and deep-seated antipathy of the US government for the Muslims, in general, and for the Palestinians and their representatives, in particular, the whole resolution is reproduced here for the reader's review. At the time this resolution was proposed, only a handful (less than 10) out of 435 representatives opposed the resolution, and seven abstained from voting. Of the 30 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, considered to be the “conscience of the US Congress,” only two voted against the resolution and seven abstained; and of the Muslim representatives at the time (2008), one voted in favor, and the other abstained.

111th CONGRESS

1st Session

H. RES. 34 [United States House of Representatives' Resolution 34]

Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

January 8, 2009

Ms. PELOSI (for herself, Mr. BOEHNER, Mr. HOYER, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. PENCE, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. McCARTHY of California, Mr. BERMAN, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. ACKERMAN, and Mr. BURTON of Indiana) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Whereas Hamas was founded with the stated goal of destroying the State of Israel;

Whereas Hamas has been designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization;

Whereas Hamas has refused to comply with the Quartet's (the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations) requirements that Hamas recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence, and agree to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians;

Whereas in June 2006, Hamas illegally crossed into Israel, attacked Israeli forces, and kidnaped Corporal Gilad Shalit, whom they continue to hold today;

Whereas Hamas has launched thousands of rockets and mortars against Israeli population centers since 2001, and has launched more than 6,000 such rockets and mortars since Israel withdrew its civilian population and its military from Gaza in 2005;

Whereas Hamas has increased the range and payload of its rockets, reportedly with support from Iran and others, putting hundreds of thousands of Israelis in danger of rocket attacks from Gaza;

Whereas Hamas locates elements of its terrorist infrastructure in civilian population centers, thus using innocent civilians as human shields;

Whereas Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a statement on December 27, 2008, that "We strongly condemn the repeated rocket and

mortar attacks against Israel and hold Hamas responsible for breaking the cease-fire and for the renewal of violence there;”

Whereas on December 27, 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said, “For approximately seven years, hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens in the south have been suffering from missiles being fired at them... In such a situation we had no alternative but to respond. We do not rejoice in battle but neither will we be deterred from it... The operation in the Gaza Strip is designed, first and foremost, to bring about an improvement in the security reality for the residents of the south of the country;”

Whereas the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including shortages of food, water, electricity, and adequate medical care, is becoming more acute;

Whereas Israel has facilitated humanitarian aid to Gaza with hundreds of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance and numerous ambulances entering the Gaza Strip since the current round of fighting began on December 27, 2008;

Whereas on January 6, 2009, before the United Nations Security Council, Secretary Rice stated that, “The situation before the current events in Gaza was clearly not sustainable. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis lived under the daily threat of rocket attack, and frankly, no country, none of our countries, would have been willing to tolerate such a circumstance. Moreover, the people of Gaza watched as insecurity and lawlessness increased and as their living conditions grew more dire because of Hamas’s actions which began with the illegal coup against the Palestinian Authority in Gaza... A cease-fire that returns to those circumstances is unacceptable and it will not last;” and

Whereas the ultimate goal of the United States is a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will ensure the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and a viable, independent, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives,

(1) expresses vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and recognizes its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against Hamas’s unceasing aggression, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter;

(2) reiterates that Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, recognize Israel’s right to exist, renounce violence, agree to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure;

(3) encourages the Administration to work actively to support a durable

and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, as soon as possible, that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding its terrorist infrastructure, including the capability to launch rockets and mortars against Israel, and thereby allowing for the long-term improvement of daily living conditions for the people of Gaza;

(4) believes strongly that the lives of innocent civilians must be protected to the maximum extent possible, expresses condolences to innocent Palestinian and Israeli victims and their families, and reiterates that humanitarian needs in Gaza should be addressed promptly and responsibly;

(5) calls on all nations, (A) to condemn Hamas for deliberately embedding its fighters, leaders, and weapons in private homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, and otherwise using Palestinian civilians as human shields, while simultaneously targeting Israeli civilians; and (B) to lay blame both for the breaking of the “calm” and for subsequent civilian casualties in Gaza precisely where blame belongs, that is, on Hamas;

(6) supports and encourages efforts to diminish the appeal and influence of extremists in the Palestinian territories, and strengthen moderate Palestinians who are committed to a secure and lasting peace with Israel;

(7) calls on Egypt to intensify its efforts to halt smuggling between Gaza and Egypt and affirms the willingness of the United States to continue to assist Egypt in these efforts;

(8) calls for the immediate release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been illegally held in Gaza since June 2006; and

(9) reiterates its strong support for a just and sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict achieved through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in order to ensure the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and a viable, independent, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

171 David R. Francis, *Flashback: Economist Tallies Swelling Cost of Israel to US*.

(New York: Daily Muslims website, January 12, 2009).

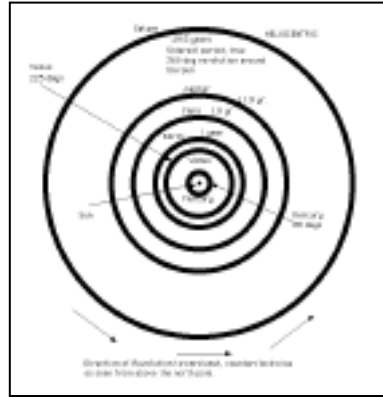
http://www.dailymuslims.com/Web_Pages/About.html

172 Described in greater detail in Volume 3 of this *tafsir*, this refers to an incident involving ‘Abdullāh ibn Jahsh, who was sent on a reconnaissance mission by the Prophet (ﷺ). While there, he ordered the seizure of a *mushrik* caravan, killing one of its guides and capturing two others. ‘Abdullāh ibn Jahsh thought it was the last day of Jumādā al-Ākhirah; in actual fact, it was the first day of the month of Rajab, one of the sacred months in which fighting and killing are banned.

173 **Nicolas Copernicus** (1453–1543) – considered to be the father of modern astronomy; born in Torun, Poland. He studied mathematics and optics at

Kracow, then canon law at Bologna, before becoming canon of Frombork. His 400 page treatise, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (completed 1530, *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*) had a hostile reception when it was published, as it challenged the ancient teachings in Christian Europe.

The Copernican system – model of the solar system in which the Sun is at the center, with the earth and other planets moving in combinations of circular movements around it (a heliocentric system). Prior to the publication of this theory in 1543, it was held by Christian European astronomers that the Earth lay at the center of the universe (terracentric system). To reproduce the observed planetary motions in that system, a complex arrangement of circular orbits was



needed. The simpler heliocentric viewpoint gave the first modern view of man's place in the universe. It fell to Kepler to demonstrate that the orbits of the planets were actually ellipses, not circles, and to Newton to explain the orbits through gravitational theory. The figure above illustrates the Copernican system of planets and their circular motion.

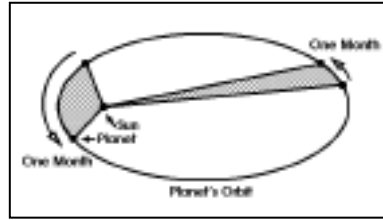
Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) – astronomer and mathematician, born in Pisa, Italy. He entered Pisa University as a medical student in 1581, and became professor of mathematics at Padua (1592–1610). In Padua he improved the refracting telescope (1610), and was the first to use it for astronomy. His realization that the ancient Aristotelian teachings about the structure of the universe were unacceptable brought severe ecclesiastical censure, and he was forced to retract his position before the Inquisition. By 1637 he had become totally blind.



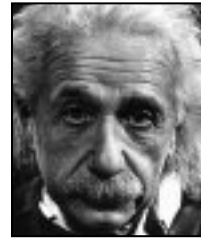
Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) – astronomer, born in Weil-der-Stadt, Germany. In 1596 he commenced a correspondence with Tycho Brahe, who was then in Prague, and from 1600 worked on Brahe's data, showing that planets orbited the Sun in ellipses.

Kepler's laws of planetary motion – fundamental laws deduced by Kepler from Tycho Brahe's data: (1) each planet travels an elliptical orbit with the Sun at one focus; (2) for a given planet radius, the vector to the Sun sweeps

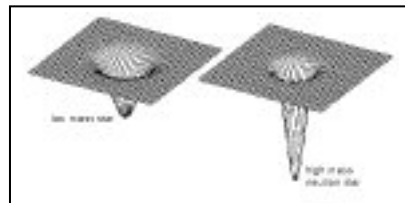
equal areas in equal times; and (3) for any two planets, the squares of the periods are proportional to the cubes of the distances from the Sun. Newton derived these from first principles using gravitational theory. The figure on the right demonstrates Kepler's second law of planetary motion.



Albert Einstein (1879–1955) – mathematical physicist, born in Ulm, Germany. He studied at Munich, Aarau, and the Zurich Polytechnic. Taking Swiss nationality in 1901, he was appointed examiner at the Swiss Patent Office (1902–1905), where he began to publish original papers on theoretical physics. He became world famous by his Special (1905) and General (1916) Theories of Relativity. He was professor at the universities of Zurich (1909), Prague (1911), and again at Zurich (1912), then director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Physical Institute in Berlin (1914–1933). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1921. After Hitler's rise to power, he left Germany, lectured at Oxford and Cambridge, and worked from 1934 at Princeton, spending the remainder of his life attempting by means of his unified field theory (1950) to establish a merger between quantum theory and his general theory of relativity. After the war, he urged international control of atomic weapons.

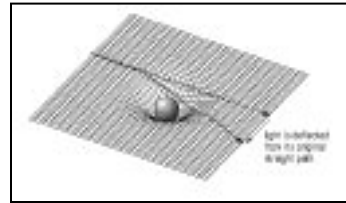


General Relativity – a theory of gravity deriving almost entirely from Einstein (1915). It supersedes Newton's theory of gravitation, which is reproduced as a weak gravity, low velocity special case, and replaces the Newtonian notion of



instantaneous action at a distance with the gravitational field as a distortion of space — time due to the presence of mass. For example, the Earth moves around the Sun because of the distortion of space-time by the Sun's greater mass. An analogy represents space-time as a rubber sheet distorted by a heavy ball representing the Sun; a smaller ball rolling by, representing a planet, will tend to fall into this depression, apparently attracted. The figure above demonstrates the relative *warping* of space-time around a light or heavy star; the stronger the gravity, the more space-time is warped. General relativity is supported by experiments which measure the bending of starlight due to the presence of the Sun's mass, and also the precession of

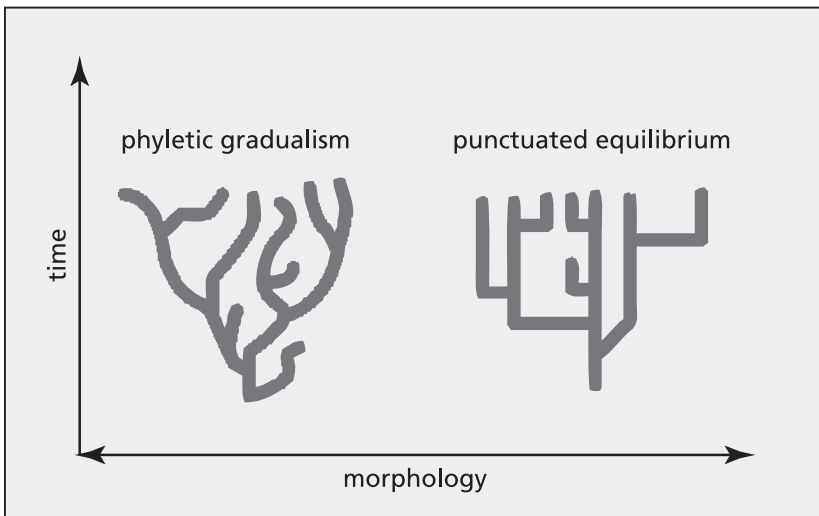
Mercury's orbit. The second figure illustrates this effect: how light *bends* when it passes by a massive object; the stronger the local gravity, the more the light path is deflected from a straight line. Other predictions include black holes and the expansion of the universe (source:



Nick Strobel, *Astronomy Notes: Curved Spacetime, Chapter 6*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).

174 The theory of evolution proposed jointly by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, and later expanded upon by Darwin in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). According to the theory, on average, more offspring are produced than are needed to replace the parents, but population size remains more or less stable in nature. There must therefore be competition for survival, and it is the best adapted (the fittest) variants which survive and reproduce. Evolution occurs by means of natural selection acting on individual variation, resulting in the survival of the fittest. The discovery of the genetic mechanism causing variation has resulted in a modified version of the theory, known as neo-Darwinism.

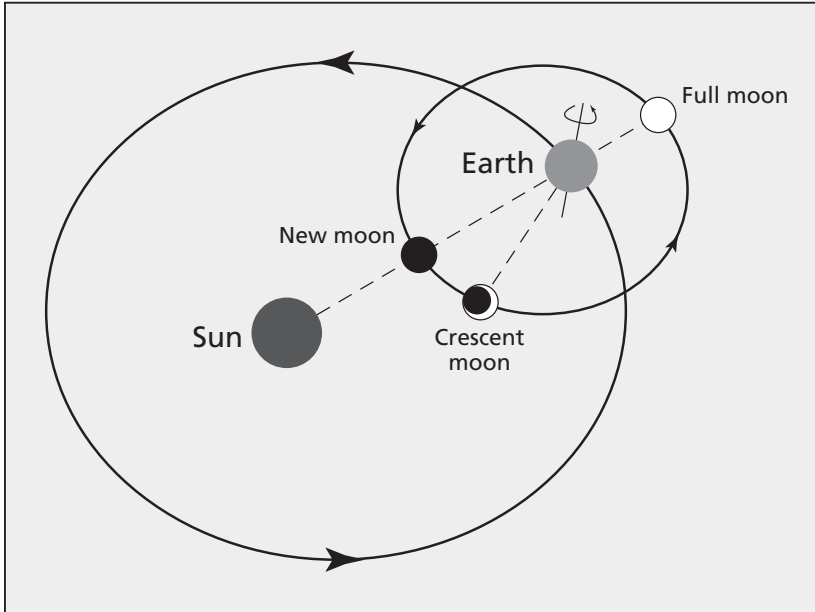
175 Below is a graphical representation of the difference between the punctuated equilibria and the phyletic gradualism schools.



176 Vega or Alpha Lyrae is the brightest star in the constellation Lyra, which lies between DEC=+30 and DEC=+40 and RA=18h and RA=19h. RA (right

ascension) and DEC (declination) are to the sky what longitude and latitude are to the surface of the Earth; DEC is measured in degrees and RA in hours. Vega is the brightest star in the northern sky and the fifth brightest in the whole sky; its mass is over three times more than that of the Sun.

177 The figure below shows a space view of the Sun, Moon, and Earth. The earth revolves around the Sun in an elliptical orbit, with the Sun off-center, and



the moon revolves around the earth in a similar way. When the new moon occurs, the Sun, Moon, and Earth are aligned as shown, and no light of the Sun falling on the Moon can come to the Earth, so it is a dark or invisible moon. About 18–24 hours after the new moon, the Moon moves away from the line of the Earth and the Sun, to its new location as shown by the location of the crescent moon. Now, the Sun and Moon have separated from the same line. The angle subtended by the Sun, Earth, and Moon is the “angular separation.” This angular separation causes the crescent to form. Until this angle becomes 7 degrees, no light of the Sun reflected by the Moon can come to the earth, because of the mountains on the surface of the Moon that block the Sun’s light. This angle must be about 10–12 degrees for the Sun’s light to reflect from the Moon, making a thin crescent that is sightable. Sometimes, this crescent is very thin and very low on the horizon, so it can not be seen as it disappears in the glare of the Sun, and therefore is not visible, even though it may remain above the horizon for 20–30 minutes after sunset.

Another important factor is the Moon’s altitude above the horizon. If the crescent thickness is sufficient, but it is not above the horizon, then it

cannot be seen. This happens in the month of September and October in the UK/USA, when the Moon is in the southern hemisphere, therefore, it cannot be seen from northern hemisphere. If the Moon is above the horizon but close to it within the glare of the Sun, then it may not be visible. A crescent within an altitude of 10 degrees is usually not visible. For a sightable crescent from any location, the following parameters are most important: (1) angular separation of the Moon from Sun as seen from Earth (this is also called elongation, or arc of light, or simply the angle from the Sun); and (2) the Moon's altitude above the horizon.

It is also a scientific fact that, if the Moon is visible anywhere on the globe, it would be more easily visible on all places west of it, within the visibility parabola. Source:

Syed Khalid Shaukat, *The Science of Moon Sighting*. (London: Ummah.net, May, 2000).

<http://www.ummah.net/moonsighting/science/moonscie.htm>

178 This is referring to 'Abd al-Azīz ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Bāz (1909–1999), who was the grand *mufī* of Saudi Arabia from 1993–1999. He went blind, due to an eye infection, by the time he reached 20 years of age. He served as a judge from 1938–1951, and later as the president and chancellor of the Islamic University of Madinah; he was also the president of the Constituent Assembly of the World Muslim League and the president of the Islamic Fiqh Assembly based in Makkah. Before his death, he had published over 60 books on a variety of topics including Hadith, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ṣalāh*, *zakāh*, *da'wah*, and Hajj. However, his scholarship and service were seriously compromised and his political maturity brought into question because of his routine legitimization of the Saudi ruling class and his habitual quietism when it came to their numerous transgressions. Among his major decisions in this regard were (1) granting of permission (when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait) to *mushrik* soldiers to build bases in the Peninsula and to use these as a staging area to attack Muslims in other countries, (2) rationalizing the transfer of Muslim wealth in the form of oil and gas revenues to private accounts in non-Muslim banks and financial institutions, and (3) endorsing the Saudi government position of supporting the Oslo Peace Accords between the PLO and the Israelis, using the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah as a precedent.



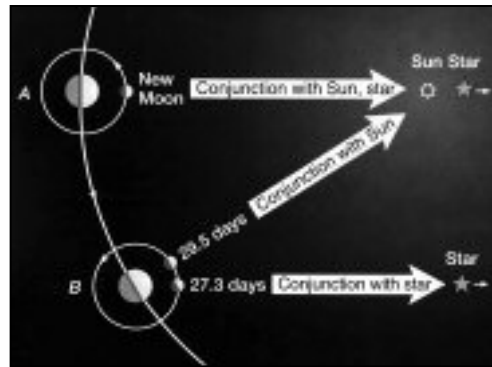
As for his perception of the shape of the Earth, flat or spherical, there is little doubt that at one time he believed the Earth to be flat. Such a position is well in keeping with the way other important decisions were made, especially when it came to the absconding royals: putting aside clear evidence from Allah's (ﷻ) Book and separating a thinking mind from a Qur'anic appraisal of socio-political currents in favor of societal status

obtained by pussyfooting around autocratic abuses and hypocrisy. Toward the end of his life, even with visual evidence presented by a Saudi astronaut, he may never have personally believed the Earth to be spherical. However, evidence of his original fatwas in this regard is now hard to come by because on-going retroactive Saudi revisionism is not only busy tampering with the Hadith and original works of scholars like Yūsuf ‘Alī, but also with the decisions and opinions of its own scholars. And, by engaging in this arcane vulgarization of Islamic scholarship, what kind of Islam do these admirers of the Saudi royal family and its stable of willing court scholars want to present to future generations of Muslims? A mishmash of pointless Saudi-Wahhābī rituals that have to be validated by secular Judeo-Christian *shirk* and imperialist-Zionist *kufri*. If Western scientists were to say tomorrow that the world is flat, then these same admirers would pull out the original opinions, in an effort to continue to sustain the icons of their retrograde orthodoxies, and say, “See, he had it right all along.”

179 Narrated by multiple sources, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

أيها الناس : إنما النسبيء زيادة في الكفر يضل به الذين كفروا . يحلونه عاما ويحرمونه عاما . ليواطئوا عدة ما حرم الله . فيحلوا ما حرم الله ويحرموا ما أحل الله . وإن الزمان قد استدار كهيئته يوم خلق الله السموات والأرض . وإن عدة الشهور عند الله اثنا عشر شهرا . منها أربعة حرم . ثلاثة متوالية . ورجب - الذي بين جمادى وشعبان

180 **synodic month** – this tracks the lunar phases, because the Moon’s appearance (crescent, gibbous, or full moon) depends on its position with respect to the Sun as seen from the Earth. The synodic month accounts for the progression of the Earth’s motion around the Sun, whereas the *sidreal* month (the time the Moon



takes to complete one full revolution around the Earth with respect to the background stars) does not. Because the Earth is constantly moving along its orbit about the Sun, the Moon must travel slightly more than 360° to get from one new moon to the next. Due to slight perturbations in the orbits of the Earth and the Moon, the synodic month varies in the range of 29.27 to 29.83 days, with the long-term average being 29.531 days. The sidreal month is a little shorter, with an average of 27.321 days. The figure above illustrates the contrast between the two types of months.

181 **Pope Gregory XIII** (1502–1585) – credited with making the last major correction to the solar time-keeping convention (1582), thus initiating the Gregorian calendar, which today is referred to as the “common” calendar. Before the Gregorian reformation of the solar calendar, the Julian calendar, in use since 45BCE, was the solar calendar of record; however it was discovered that the Julian calendar was adding one day every 128 years; thus the actual date of Easter, by 1582, was about ten days off. So, Pope Gregory, with the help of Jesuit astronomer Christopher Clavius, issued a decree that the day after Thursday, October 5, 1582 would be Friday, October, 15, 1582. The Gregorian correction of the Julian calendar was not immediately and universally adopted, even by Christendom. It took most of Protestant Europe over a hundred years to adopt the Gregorian calendar, with America and Great Britain as the last ones to follow suit in 1752. Eastern Orthodox Christianity did not adopt the new calendar for a few hundred years; in fact Russia only switched over in 1917 when the Bolsheviks formally adopted the Gregorian system, and Greece, the last of the Europeans to make the transition, in 1923.



182 Khalil Abdul-Rahman, *The Strategic Importance of the Islamic Calendar*. (Columbia, Maryland: thinkstrategy.org website, 1421AH).
<http://thinkstrategy.org/IslamicCalendar.html>

183 Refers to the Serbian invasion and occupation of Bosnia from 1992–1995. During the war, over two-thirds of the 110,000 people killed were Bosnian Muslims, and 83% of all civilian casualties were Bosnians; in addition, over 1.3 million Bosnian Muslims were displaced from their homes. The Serbian high command specifically instructed average soldiers to target the children and the women, and humiliate them so egregiously that when stories of the abuse would spread, the rest of the population would be too scared to put up any resistance. Women and girls as young as 12 years of age were raped repeatedly in rape motels and rape centers, in some cases over 100 times per day. So far, by 2008, only 45 Serbian servicemen or leaders have been convicted of war crimes.

Refers to the on-going (now 2009) US occupation of Iraq, which officially started in 2003 with the stated aim of clearing the country of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and paving the way (by ousting Saddam Hussein) for a model Middle Eastern democracy. No WMDs were found, and now the US is being more “realistic” about the waning possibility of a secular, Western-style democracy in Iraq. Despite official rhetoric from the new US administration, under President Obama, about significant troop drawdowns

in the coming years, the fact that the US embassy in Baghdad is the most heavily fortified structure of its kind in the world and that Iraqi oil revenues are funnelled through the Federal Reserve Bank in New York indicates an enduring US “presence” in Iraq for the extended future.

184 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1411AH), 1st ed., p. 184.

185 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
إذا قاتل أحدكم فليجنب الوجه

186 From the *sunan* of Abū Dāwūd.
أعف الناس قتلة أهل الإيمان

187 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur‘ān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 188.

188 Narrated by Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, and recorded by Abū Dāwūd.

غزونا مع عبد الرحمن بن خالد بن الوليد فأني بأربعة أعلاج من العدو فأمر بهم فقتلوا صبيرا بالنبل . فبلغ ذلك أبا أيوب الأنصاري فقال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ينهى عن قتل الصبر فولذي نفسي بيده لو كانت دجاجة ما صبرتها فبلغ ذلك عبد الرحمن بن خالد بن الوليد فأعتق أربع رقاب

189 From Buraydah ibn al-Ḥaṣīb al-Aslamī, and recorded by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

اغزوا باسم الله وفي سبيل الله وقاتلوا من كفر بالله اغزوا ولا تغدروا ولا تغلوا ولا تمثلوا ولا تقتلوا وليدا

190 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur‘ān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 189.

191 Refer to endnote 98.

192 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

كان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بارزا يوما للناس . فأتاه جبريل فقال: ما الإيمان؟ قال: أن تؤمن بالله وملائكته وبعثاته ورسوله وتؤمن بالبعث . قال: ما الإسلام؟ قال: الإسلام: أن تعبد الله ولا تشرك به . وتقيم الصلاة . وتؤتي الزكاة المفروضة . وتصوم رمضان . قال: ما الإحسان؟ قال: أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه . فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك . قال: متى الساعة؟ قال: ما المسؤول عنها بأعلم من السائل . وسأخبرك عن أشراطها: إذا ولدت الأمة ربتها . وإذا تناول رعاة الإبل البهيم في البنيان . في خمس لا يعلمهن إلا الله . ثم تلا النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: { إن الله عنده علم الساعة } الآية . ثم أدبر . فقال: ردوه . فلم يروا شيئا . فقال: هذا جبريل . جاء يعلم الناس دينهم .

193 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qurʾān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 193.

194 **Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah** (691–751AH) – also known by his given name, Abū ‘Abdillāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Sa’d al-Zur’ī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī; born and died in Damascus. He was an imam, a *ḥāfiẓ*, a grammarian, and a *faqīh*. His father was the superintendant (*al-qayyim*) of the Jawziyah school in Damascus, and his first teacher. Thus, he was better known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, or just Ibn al-Qayyim. His other teachers were Shihāb al-Nabulsī, al-Qāḍī Taqī al-Dīn Sulaymān, and then Ibn Taymiyah for 16 years. He suffered the fate of Ibn Taymiyah’s persecution by the government of that time. He was imprisoned along with Ibn Taymiyah in a prison called Qal’ah Dimashq. He was only released after his teacher and mentor Ibn Taymiyah died under detention. The scholars of that era and area knew him well and respected him for his intellect and profound education. His best known works are *I’lām al-Muwaqqi’īn ‘an Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, *Zād al-Ma’ād fi Hadyi Khayri al-‘Ibād*, *Madārij al-Sālikin*, *‘Uddah al-Ṣābirin*, *al-Rūḥ*, and *al-Ṭuruq al-Hikmiyah fi al-Siyāsah al-Shar’iyah*.

195 What is indicated here is that this is the minority view; however this view carries much weight in light of the events of the day — especially those that related to building the emerging Islamic mentality along post-national and transcultural lines — and the general character of the Qur’an in preparing the Muslims to anticipate activities they would do well into the future. The majority view is that *Sūrah al-Ḥajj* was revealed both in Makkah and in Madinah right around the time of the Hijrah, with the first 24 *āyāt* being revealed in the last stages of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) stay in Makkah and the remainder (*āyāt* 25–78) being revealed in the early stages of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) arrival in Madinah. However, the points made are still consistent. Firstly, the Hajj was probably prescribed as an obligation long before the liberation of Makkah several years later. And more importantly, the Muslims had more of a right to the legacy of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) than the *mushriks* who had subverted the universal character of Makkah, al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, and the Hajj into a set of behaviors that were not only far removed from the imperatives of Ibrāhīm and Ismā’il (ﷺ), but also into a national or racial “culture” that was centered around Quraysh and none other.

196 Recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

من كان معه هدي فليهل بحج وعمرة

197 From Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Ja’sham al-Madlajī, and recorded by al-Nawawī.

قلت يا رسول الله أعمرتنا هذه لعامنا أم للأبد قال للأبد دخلت العمرة في الحج إلى يوم القيامة

198 From Zayd ibn Thābit, and recorded by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī.

الحج والعمرة فريضتان لا يضرك بأيهما بدأت

199 From ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, and located in all the sources.

بني الإسلام على خمسة شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمدا رسول الله وإقام الصلاة وإيتاء الزكاة وصوم رمضان وحج البيت من استطاع إليه سبيلا

200 From the *sunan* of Ibn Mājah.

الحج جهاد والعمرة تطوع

201 From Jābir ibn ‘Abullāh, and recorded by al-Tirmidhī.

أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم سئل عن العمرة أواجبة هي ؟ قال : لا . وأن تعتمروا خير لكم

202 The so-called “*haram area*” in Makkah varies according to different *fiqhī* opinions; suffice it to say that this particular *tafsīr* does not go into *fiqhī* details; however if one is interested in these details, refer to:

Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdah wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1411AH), 1st ed., 32 vol.

203 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī.

سمعت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: من حج لله . فلم يرفث ولم يفسق . رجع كيوم ولدته أمه .

204 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur‘ān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 197.

205 Ibid., p. 197.

206 Ibid., p. 197.

207 Ibid., p. 197.

208 From ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ya‘mar al-Daylī, and recorded by al-Albānī.

شهدت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بعرفة وأتاه ناس من نجد فأمرؤا رجلا فسأله عن الحج فقال الحج عرفه . من جاء ليلة جمع قبل صلاة الصبح . فقد أدرك حجة . أيام منى ثلاثة أيام من تعجل في يومين فلا إثم عليه . ومن تأخر فلا عليه . ثم أُرِدَف رجلا . فجعل ينادي بها في الناس

209 From 'Urwaḥ ibn Muḍarris al-Ṭā'i, and recorded in al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Tirmidhī.

أتيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بالموقف يعني بجمع قلت جئت يا رسول الله من جبل طيبٍ أكلت مطيتي وأتعبت نفسي والله ما تركت من جبل إلا وقفت عليه فهل لي من حج فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من أدرك معنا هذه الصلاة وأتى عرفات قبل ذلك ليلاً أو نهاراً فقد تم حجه وقضى تفته

210 Ibn Mardawayh and al-Hākim in al-Mustadrak; a hadith by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Mubārak al-'Ayshī as related by al-Musawwar ibn Mikhramāh.

خطبنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم . وهو بعرفات . فحمد الله وأثنى عليه . ثم قال: أما بعد - وكان إذا خطب خطبة: قال - أما بعد - فإن هذا اليوم الحج الأكبر . ألا وإن أهل الشرك والأوثان كانوا يدفعون في هذا اليوم قبل أن تطلع الشمس . مخالفنا هدينا هدي أهل الشرك

211 From Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, as recorded by Muslim.

ثم ركب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم حتى أتى الموقف فجعل بطن ناقته إلى الصخرات وجعل جبل المشاة بين يديه واستقبل القبلة فلم يزل واقفاً حتى غربت الشمس وذهبت الصفرة قليلاً حتى غاب القرص وأردف أسامة بن زيد خلفه فدفع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وقد ثنق القصواء بالزمام حتى إن رأسها ليصيب مورك رحله ويقول بيده اليمنى أيها الناس السكينة السكينة كلما أتى حبلاً من الخيال أرخى لها قليلاً حتى تصعد ثم أتى المزدلفة فصلى بها المغرب والعشاء بأذان واحد وإقامتين ولم يصل بينهما شيئاً ثم اضطجع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم حتى طلع الفجر فصلى الفجر حين تبين له الصبح بأذان وإقامة ثم ركب القصواء حتى أتى المشعر الحرام فرقى عليه فحمد الله وكبره وهلله فلم يزل واقفاً حتى أسفر جدا ثم دفع قبل أن تطلع الشمس

212 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 201.

213 **UN World Health Organization (WHO)** – established in 1948 as a successor to the Health Organization, an agency of the League of Nations, which itself was transformed into the United Nations in 1945; headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. According to its own words, “It [WHO] is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.” WHO’s core functions include (1) providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed; (2) shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge; (3) setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation; (4) articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options; (5) providing technical support, catalyzing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity; and (6) monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends. Generally when the WHO talks about “shaping the research agenda... and dissemination of valuable knowledge,” it uses euphemisms such as

“reproductive health services” as an umbrella term to cover access to abortion, contraceptives, and condoms. It also acts as a vehicle to open new, and as yet undeveloped, markets for Western pharmaceutical companies, who have been known to dump outdated stocks of medications as well as banned (in the Western world) vaccines, especially those with mercury as a preservative, on unsuspecting and uneducated third-world populations.

214 **Confucius** (551–479BCE) – last name of Kongfuzi or K’ung Fu-tse (Chinese for *Venerated Master Kong*); philosopher, born in the state of Lu, China (Shandong in modern China). Largely, self-educated, he married at 19, and enjoyed a successful career, becoming minister of justice. He began teaching in 531BCE, aiming to resurrect traditional values and to reinforce the structure of social obligations and behaviors which manifested them. Fundamental to his teachings was benevolence, humanity, or goodness, which embraced duty, loyalty, and sincerity — fundamental for the maintenance of harmony at all levels of society. His precepts are preserved in the *Analects* (*lunyu*), probably written by some of his 22 disciples. No writings can definitely be attributed to him. His teachings later inspired a cult of veneration: three Han emperors visited his shrine, and all schools were ordered to sacrifice to him from 59CE. Later, Confucianism became the state religion of China, but he was denounced as a class exploiter during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–1976).

215 **Ibn Khaldūn** (732–808AH) – also known by his given name Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥadramī. He was born in North Africa, near what is now Tunisia, to an aristocratic Andalusian family that had settled in North Africa after the Muslims were forcibly expelled from Spain. After memorizing the Qur’an at an early age, he studied the Hadith, *fiqh*, and the Shari’ah. Later, through years of association with Sufis, he also studied mathematics, logic, and philosophy, especially the works of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, al-Rāzī, and al-Ṭūsī. At the age of 17, he became an orphan, losing both of his parents to the plague. From the age of 20, and for the next 22 years, he was engaged in political activity, ranging from royal scribe to prime minister of local or regional potentates in Granada and North Africa; he was sought after by rulers because of his political skills in engaging the berbers of North Africa. Tiring of politics, he later settled in Tunis where he exclusively devoted himself to scholarly and research activities. He spent the last 20 years of his life in Egypt where the Mamlūk sultan Barqūq made him the grand *qāḍī* of the Mālikī school of thought; while in Egypt, he also took part in a jihad against the Tartars, and was named one of the chief negotiators with the Tartar conqueror Timur. Who today would be characterized as a renaissance man, Ibn Khaldūn was adept in the following disciplines: astronomy, economics, history, Islamic sciences and theology, law

and adjudication, mathematics, military strategy, nutrition, philosophy, social science, politics, and statesmanship. Due to his in-depth and exhaustive analytical approach, he is considered to be the father of recorded history (historiography, philosophy of history) and sociology (demography, cultural history, anthropology). His major works include the multi-volume work on recording history, *Kitab al-'Ibār*, of which the first volume is called *al-Muqaddimah*; a book on Sufism, *Ṣafā' al-Sā'il*; and an autobiography, *al-Ta'rif bi-ibn Khaldūn wa Riḥlatuhu Gharban wa Sharqan*.

216 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 206.

217 Proverbs, 16:18, King James Version.

218 **International Development Association (IDA)** – an organization affiliated to, but distinct from, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), based in Washington, DC. It was set up in 1960 “to provide help to the world’s 50 poorest countries by giving them aid on very easy terms.”

219 Narrated by Imam Aḥmad and Muslim.

مثل المؤمنین فی نوادهم وتراحمهم وتعاطفهم كمثل الجسد الواحد إذا اشتكى منه عضو تداعى له سائر الجسد بالخصى والسهر

220 From Anas ibn Mālīk, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

كل المسلم على المسلم حرام دمه وماله وعرضه

221 1 Chronicles, 21:1, King James Version.

222 Matthew, 25:41; Hebrews, 2:14; Revelation, 20:4–10

Eschatology – the theological branch concerned with such final things as heaven and hell, death and judgement, etc.

223 2 Corinthians, 11:14–15.

224 John, 8:44.

225 Mark, 7: 22–27; Acts, 10:38; 2 Corinthians, 12:7.

226 **inquisition** – a term used in the Roman Catholic Church to signify the charging, the trial, and the conviction of accused heretics (or political rivals)

who were considered to have violated the canon law of the Church. The term could describe a process such as an ecclesiastical tribunal, the trial of an individual, the institutions responsible, or the historical expurgation movements against heresy. As for the latter, there were four major ones: (1) the Medieval Inquisition (1184–1230s), (2) the Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834), (3) the Portuguese Inquisition (1536–1821), and (4) the Roman Inquisition (1542–1860). The Medieval Inquisition was directed mostly at “apostate” or heretical sects of Christianity like the Cathars and the Waldensians in France and Italy; a papal decree officially authorized the use of torture to secure confessions from accused heretics. Run by royal decree and staffed by secular clergy given a papal endorsement, the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, spanning into all the occupied colonies of Spain and Portugal, were basically concurrent and by far the most brutal. They targeted mostly converts to Christianity from Judaism (Marranos) and Islam (Moriscos) who were thought to be secretly practicing their original religion, but publicly professing fealty to Christianity. The Spanish Inquisition also arrested and tried Protestant as well as Greek Orthodox Christians; the Portuguese inquisition principally earmarked Sephardic Jews for trial and execution, but also extended into Portuguese colonies in India, where Hindus were also persecuted. The Roman Inquisition also had a legal foundation in the Congregation of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, created by Pope Paul III in 1542. It had the task of “maintaining the integrity of the faith,” mostly by examining and then exterminating false doctrines, usually represented by ideological and political rivals, the most notable of which was Galileo Galilei. As Church power began to recede, this congregation morphed into The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office in 1908, and then in 1965, it finally became what it is today, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Just as the birth mother of the United Nations was the vulturistic group of colonizing European countries, the League of Nations, the legal and theological foundations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are rooted in the inquisitorial version of ethnic cleansing.

227 **Cecil Frances Humphreys Alexander (1818–1865)** – poetess and hymn-writer, most famous for her book, *Hymns for Little Children*. The particular citation is from the hymn, *All things bright and beauteous*, all of which is reproduced below:

ALL things bright and beauteous,
 All creatures great and small,
 All things wise and wondrous,
 The LORD GOD made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
 Each little bird that sings,

He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.

**The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
GOD made them, high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.**

The purple-headed mountain,
The river running by,
The sunset, and the morning,
That brightens up the sky,

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.

The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water,
We gather every day;

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is GOD Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

228 **Ambrose** (339–397^{CE}) – Bishop of Milan (northern Italy). Born into the aristocratic Roman family of Aurelius at Trier, the imperial residence in Gaul, Ambrose was the first Latin church father from a Christian family. He was trained in rhetoric and law, with thorough preparation in the Greek language. He moved up rapidly in the Roman government. Ambrose, a champion of orthodoxy, introduced the allegorical interpretation of scripture to the West. His greatest impact was on the relationship of church and state.

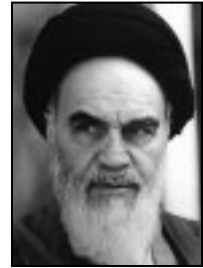
229 Refer to endnote 7.

230 **The Great Society** – social reforms as government-sponsored programs initiated officially by Lyndon Johnson (1963–1969, as president), the 36th president of the United States, under the stewardship of Sargent Shriver (1915–present); the stated aims were to eliminate poverty and racial injustice. Funding for Great Society programs was always overshadowed by fund-

ing for US military engagements abroad, especially the Vietnam War (1959–1975). Nonetheless, lasting achievements of the social reforms include the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Job Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Project Head Start, the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Social Security Act of 1965 authorizing Medicare and Medicaid, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Department of Transportation, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Most of these programs and initiatives were opposed by Irving Kristol (1920–present) and other anti-communist, pro-Israeli liberals, who later in the 1980s and 1990s became known as the neoconservatives.

231 Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*. (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), p. 1.

232 **Al-Imam al-Khomeini** (1902–1989) – the first full imam in contemporary times; imam and leader of the Islamic Revolution and State, 1979–1989. Born into an observant “Shī‘ī” family in Khomein, he was educated in Islamic studies at a school run by Ayatullah ‘Abd al-Karīm Hā‘irī-Yazdī in Arak. Later Khomeini, the student, graduated in Shari‘ah, ethics, and abstractive philosophy. Over the years he related academic theory to political practice, teaching the meaning of social justice to his students. In 1941 he published a book attacking secularism. Around the end of WWII he became Hujjat al-Islam and began to conduct sessions with a regular circle of students. After the death of Ayatullah Muḥammad Ḥusayn Burujirdī in 1961 he published a book entitled, *Clarification of Points of the Shari‘ah*, which advanced him to the level of Ayatullah. At this point he became a visible and senior Ayatullah. In 1963 he exposed the Shah of Iran and what was called the “White Revolution.” His arrest on June 5th, 1963 in Qum touched off a countrywide protest against the Shah. The Shah used his armed forces to crush the people’s movement causing thousands to die. Pressured by the ‘alims, the Shah released Ayatullah Khomeini and put him under house arrest. After his release in 1964, Ayatullah Khomeini resumed opposition politics. In November he was exiled to Turkey. After staying there for a year he left for Najaf, Iraq. From there he stepped up his efforts against the Shah. In 1971, (Imam) Khomeini condemned the celebrations related to 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran. During that year, his book, *Islamic Government: Rule of the Faqīh*, was published.



In 1975 (Imam) Khomeini attacked the inauguration of a single party, the Rastakhiz, in Iran. His call resonated among clergy, the people, and the

educated class. Soon a stream of supporters and organizers began to converge on the Imam in Najaf. They put out and organized the distribution of (Imam) Khomeini's audio tapes that were to become the voice and the conscience of the Iranian people. This set into motion a popular movement expressing itself in massive and repeated strikes and demonstrations. The momentum became irreversible from 1977–1978 when he was exiled to France. The popular pro-Khomeini cadence accelerated causing the disintegration of the 413,000-strong Iranian military. On January 13th, 1979 Imam Khomeini appointed the Islamic Revolutionary Council (IRC) to facilitate the formation of a provisional government whose first task was to produce a constitution for an Islamic Republic.

Imam Khomeini returned to Iran in February 1979 and led the Islamic Republic and people of Iran through what was to become and remain a military and economic war by regional regimes and global powers. The military war of aggression by the Ba'this in Iraq ended with a UN brokered cease-fire in July 1988. He joined heavenly company within a year after reluctantly agreeing to the cease-fire.

233 For further detail into the consuming influence of Jewish ownership on Hollywood, refer to endnote 6.

234 **physicalism** – in philosophy, the view that any empirical proposition can be expressed as a statement about publically observable physical objects and events. The doctrine was developed by “logical positivists” such as Neurath (an Austrian philosopher) and Carnap (a German philosopher).

dialectical materialism – a central doctrine of Marxism, which combines Hegel's idea of dialectic with a thoroughgoing materialism directly opposed to idealism. Its claims are that quantitative changes in matter yield qualitative changes (for example, the emergence of mind); that nature is a unity of contradictory opposites; and that the result of one opposite (thesis) clashing with another (antithesis) is a resolution (synthesis) that preserves and transcends the opposites.

235 Quentin Tarantino (director) and Lawrence Bender (producer), *Pulp Fiction* (feature film). (Hollywood, CA: Miramax Films, 1994).

Trey Parker (director and producer), *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (feature film). (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1999).

236 Refers to the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in the State of Colorado, USA. In the deadliest high school shooting in US history, two students from the high school, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, killed 12 of

their classmates and one teacher, and injured 21 others before committing suicide. Both Harris and Klebold had an arrest record, and at the time of the shooting, Harris was taking Luvox, an anti-depressant, and Klebold had a known drinking problem. The weapons obtained by the killers and then subsequently used in the massacre were a 9mm Intratec Tec-9 semi-automatic handgun, a Hi-Point 995 Carbine 9mm semi-automatic rifle, a 12-gauge Savage-Springfield 67H pump-action shotgun, a 12-gauge Stevens 311D double barreled sawed-off shotgun; in addition, with instructions from the internet, they built 99 IEDs (improvised explosive devices) of different shapes and sizes.

237 **Abu Ghraib** – notorious prison where Saddam Hussein used to incarcerate and torture outright opponents (Kurds and Shi'is) and incidental critics of his Ba'ath regime; became world-renown when the United States appropriated it to hold, abuse, humiliate, and torture suspected members of the insurgency as well as ordinary civilians who were randomly picked up for the purpose of extracting information on the insurgency. In 2004, stories and photos of what American soldiers were doing to POWs and detainees were leaked to the press by one of the soldiers — presumably one with a conscience. These photos came to define the US occupation of Iraq and showed the world that the US was not on any kind of civilizing mission; in fact the abuses at Abu Ghraib were only the opening chapter of a larger book of historical and current abuses that were going on in US-run prisons all over the world, including Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and other “mobile” prisons on US aircraft carriers. When the story broke, the George W. Bush administration started to back away from previous US commitments to the Geneva conventions on torture and initiated a legal process of redefining torture, so that administration officials could not be charged with war crimes. So far, other than a few enlisted men, no high-level Bush administration officials — President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Secretary of States Rice and Powell, and others — who reports now have as actually sanctioning torture, have been indicted or charged with a crime. The photos of US abuses of Iraqi prisoners are widely available on the internet; more photos, which were not originally released in 2004 but viewed by US congressmen and senators, are set to be released by the end of May, 2009. The Obama administration, assuming office in January, 2009, is pushing to return the definition of torture back to the Geneva convention standards, but also is pushing not to prosecute those who would have earlier ordered the torture to take place.

238 Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America*. (New York: Vintage Books, A division of Random House, 1967).

- 239 Ellis Cashmore with Michael Banton, James Jennings, Barry Troyna, and Pierre L. van den Berghe (editors), *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*. (London: Routledge, 1996). 4th edition, p. 169–70.
- 240 Ibid., p. 169–170.
- 241 Philip Shabecoff, *Environmental Groups Told They Are Racists in Hiring*. (New York: New York Times, US Politics section, February 1, 1990).
- 242 Ellis Cashmore (editor) *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*. (London: Routledge, 1996). 4th edition, p. 118–19.
- 243 **Commission for Racial Equality** – originally established by the Race Relations Act of 1976 in the UK with the aim of identifying racial discrimination and promoting racial equality in terms of opportunity and recognition; has been recently absorbed into the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The aims and methods of the new commission, especially its research criteria and processes are identified on the commission’s website: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/policyresearch/research/Pages/default.aspx>
- 244 **Vlaams Blok** – founded in 1978 as a right-wing Belgian political party advocating exclusionary immigration policy and Flemish autonomy; changed its name to Vlaams Belang in 2004. In the 2007 election, out of a possible 190 elected representatives, Vlaams Belang accounted for only 22 seats.
- Front National** – founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen in France; considered to be an extreme right-wing ultra-nationalist political party; became the third largest political party between 2002 and 2006. It advocates a return to traditional (Christian) values, such as restrictions on abortion and homosexuality; reinstatement of the death penalty; greater independence from the European Union and international organizations like the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund; and the end of non-European immigration, particularly Muslim immigrants from North Africa. Their platform calls for a “humane transfer” of all non-Europeans back to their countries of origin, and a citizenship based not on birthplace, but on having an ancestor(s) who has citizenship in France. Le Pen and his party won maximum recognition during the build up and aftermath of the infamous French *hijāb* ban on Muslim women in public institutions. In the 2007 elections, the party won no seats in the French National Assembly or the European Parliament (that is, the governing body of the European Union).

Die Republikaner – founded in 1982 by Christian Socialist Union (CSU) members, Franz Handlos, Ekkehard Voigt, and Franz Schonhuber, who did not regard the CSU to be conservative enough, especially on (Turkish) immigration. Considered to be a right-wing, conservative political party, it is not as extreme as the Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) or the National Democratic Party (NDP); however, its platform is dominated by the desire to restrict (mostly) Muslim immigration in a big way. The party has rarely garnered the minimum percentage of votes (5%) necessary to place a representative in the German Bundestag (parliament).

Deutsche Volksunion – or the German People's Union; founded as an informal association in 1971 by Gerhard Frey, and officially became a political party in 1987; considered to be an ultra-nationalist, whites-first party. Its main platform issue is also the elimination of non-European (and non-white) immigration. So far, like the Republikaner party, it has never collected enough support to reach the minimum voting percentage of 5% so that it can place even a single representative in the Bundestag.

Glossary

‘abd – a person who complies with and conforms to Allah (ﷻ).

adhān – the call to ṣalāḥ.

Ahl al-Kitāb – Folks of the Book (also People of the Book); this expression refers to people who belong or belonged to any of a number of holy books or scriptures that were revealed by Allah (ﷻ) to the Prophets (ﷺ) throughout the course of history. Most notably among them are “Jews” and “Christians” who still have an affinity with or a “working relationship” with the Bible — Old or New Testaments.

ākhirah – the end-life or afterlife; this expression refers to the here-after, or afterlife, or life after death. In a more refined sense, this word alludes to the time-period that will follow the Day of Resurrection and Judgment.

al-ḥamdu lillāh – thanks and praise to Allah (ﷻ).

‘alim – an Islamic scholar.

al-ladhīna āmanū – those who are securely committed to Allah (ﷻ); the first among equals in an Islamic society.

Allāhu akbar – Allah (ﷻ) is more significant.

‘amilū al-ṣaliḥāt – exerted efforts of merit; this is an honorific phrase that usually follows the phrase *al-ladhīna āmanū* in the Qur’anic discourse. The implication is that there is a synergy between a secure commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and the exertion of efforts of merit and rectitude.

āminū – commit yourselves to God; this does not, as rendered erroneously by most translators, refer to the words *believe* or *profess faith*.

amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa nahī ‘an al-munkar – to demand and authorize what is self-evidently right and to deconstruct and decommission what is self-evidently obnoxious.

amwāl al-nās – the public wealth (assets) of the people; could also correspond to the portion of the state budget that comes from the people.

Anṣār – supporters; in Islamic literature this word has to be understood in context. It could occur in reference to the Almighty or it could be in reference to the Prophet (ﷺ).

al-ard – land, territory, hemisphere, earth.

al-samā’ – sky, outer space, heaven.

al-ashhur al-ḥurum – the sacred and safe (non-combat) months of the Islamic lunar calendar: Dhū al-Qa’dah, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, al-Muḥarram, and Rajab.

asmā' al-ḥusná – Allah's (ﷻ) beautiful and excelling names or attributes.

'Aṣr – the sapping or draining of the daytime; usually refers to the time of day when a *ṣalāh* is performed mid-time between noon and sunset.

āyah – demonstration; this could refer to Allah's (ﷻ) demonstration through revelation, that is, the verse(s) of the Generous Qur'an; and it can also refer to Allah's (ﷻ) demonstration of power and authority in the course of prophetic and social history. Plural for *āyah* is *āyāt*.

āyāt – plural of *āyah*.

āyāt bayyināt – clear illustrations.

al-baḥīrah – a she-camel whose ear has been obviously cleaved, who reproduced at least five times, whose meat and milk was unlawful for women (in *jāhiliyah* times).

bid'ah – a negative modification, a transposed variation; this term in Islamic *fiqhī* (jurisprudential) discourse, especially by those who consider themselves *salafīs*, refers to additions or subtractions from the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah; especially additions. It has a derogatory undertone when used by some *salafīs*. They cannot visualize a *bid'ah ḥasanah* (a positive modification) as a component of *ijtihād*.

birr – virtue; this word, as the verse in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* makes clear is the description of Muslims who liberate themselves from a mechanical performance of their duties to a conscientious performance. They are stimulated by a daily awareness of Allah (ﷻ), making them generous with their time and money as a matter of principle and as a regenerating quality.

bismillāhi al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm – In the name of the Mercy-Giver, the Merciful.

da'wah – *call*; contemporarily used, though not necessarily right, to mean missionary activity designed to convince non-Muslims of Allah's (ﷻ) message.

dhabh – *animal slaughter according to Islamic principles and standards.*

dhabīḥah – *the edible animal slaughtered according to Islamic principles and standards.*

dhawi al-qurbá – *next of kin.*

dhikr – *consciousness*; many times this word refers to a person's consciousness of Allah (ﷻ). This consciousness is not achieved simply by remembering Him, but further by Him reminding us.

dhirā' – *an ancient means of measurement based on the forearm.* It used to be the *shar'ī* way for measuring length. A *dhirā'* is the length of six fist-folds, with each fist-fold comprising the width of four fingers. Converting a *dhirā'* into the metric system it would be about 45.7cm.

dīn – *pattern and prototype*; this word is probably one of the most mistranslated words. The usual translation of the word is *religion*. But in a better understanding of Islamic terms the word *dīn* should carry within its meaning a lively prototype and a social system. As such a *dīn* could be man-made and in denial of Allah (ﷻ) or it may be in conformity with Allah (ﷻ) and in affirmation of Him.

dīyah – *blood money, indemnity.*

du'ā' – *prayer or a reverent petition to Allah (ﷻ).*

fāḥishah – *misconduct, vicious behavior.*

Fajr – *break of the day, the first light of day*; this is when obedient Muslims offer their first *ṣalāh* of the day.

al-fajr al-kādhīb – horizontal light followed by darkness.

faqīh – savant, academician; one who specializes, in particular, in matters that are jurisprudential.

farḍ – mandatory; in the *shar‘i* context, a mandatory act required either of the Muslim individual (*farḍ ‘ayn*) or Muslim community (*farḍ kifāyah*).

Fath – the liberation of Makkah; literally, a breakthrough.

fiqh – practical knowledge, legal knowledge, jurisprudence.

fi al-riqāb – legally and socially chained (into slavery).

fi sabīlillāh – on a course to Allah (ﷻ); for the cause of Allah (ﷻ).

fitnah – sedition, confusion-to-chaos, affliction, trials and tribulation.

fitrah – man’s God-given state of nature.

ghayb – the unseen, the metaphysical, the pre- or post-sensual.

ghusl – and Islamic bath; the intentional bathing of the Muslim body with pure water.

hadith – a verbal or practical precedent of the Prophet (ﷺ); the simple linguistic meaning of the word is “speech.”

al-Hadith – the full body of hadith literature of the Prophet (ﷺ).

ḥadīth qudsī – a statement in which the words are the Prophet’s (ﷺ), but the meaning is divinely revealed.

ḥāfiz – a person who has memorized the Qur’an.

ḥalāl – sanctioned, ritually fit; this word roughly corresponds to the word *kosher* in some of its biblical usage. The word extends over ritual and legal practices.

ḥami – the male animal whose heat impregnates multiple females; he is not to be worked, and not to be denied water or pasture.

ḥaqq – truth, veracity, validity.

ḥarām – taboo, unauthorized or unlawful; this word is the opposite of *ḥalāl*.

Ḥarb al-Basūs – intermittent warfare/skirmishes in Arabia among Arabian tribes at the end of the fifth century CE.

ḥayāt al-raḥm – life in the womb (the life of a human embryo during the nine-month gestation).

ḥikmah – proportionate understanding (of things); wisdom.

hilāl – crescent moon.

‘ibādah – conforming and complying with Allah (ﷻ); this is another one of those words badly bruised through translation. Translators render its meanings as *worship*. False. It is much more than a devotional or ritual gesture or habit. It is the notions and actions of man according to Allah’s (ﷻ) values and principles.

ibn al-sabīl – wayfarer, homeless.

‘iddah – a woman’s prescribed retreat or waiting period (after divorce or husband’s death).

ifāḍah – flux, stream, surge.

iftār – breaking the fast.

ihlāl – a release from (or voiding of) ritual consecration.

iḥrām – a state of ritual consecration.

iḥsān – perfection; this is an Islamic word-cum-concept. The idea is to put in the extra effort for completion and culmination of any God-driven and God-ordained task. The epitome and paradigm of this human action-to-perfection is for each person to always be mindful that even if he does not see Allah (ﷻ), he is always seen by Him. Nothing escapes His attention. Therefore, everything someone does has to be done to meet the “higher standards of Allah (ﷻ)” knowing that He is watching.

iḥṣār – confinement; a temporary and unavoidable cessation of Hajj and ‘Umrah activities after entering into iḥrām.

ijtihād – a legal Islamic assessment or edict; this word infers a rigorous scholarly effort to reach an informed opinion based upon the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

‘ilm – conscious knowledge.

imān – secure commitment, covenant; the word is virtually a distillation of *amānah* (trust) and *amn* (security).

imsāk – withholding; when applied to fasting it means abstaining from food, water, and sex during the day; when applied to husband-wife separation it means barring divorce and resuming normal marital relations.

infāq – spending; this is the psychological and social status of persons and people before the terms and conditions of *ṣadaqah* and *zakāh* kick in.

iqāmat al-ṣalāh – standardizing (and socializing) the ṣalāh.

'Ishā' – *nightly prayers*; this is the ending part of the day in which a devout Muslim orients himself/herself towards Allah (ﷻ) in reverent petition.

istighfār – *asking for forgiveness*.

i'tikāf – *praying in seclusion; retreating into a masjid for devotion*.

ittaqaaw – *they were actively conscious of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence*.

ittaqillāh – *You! Be conscious and avert [Allah's (ﷻ) corrective power presence]*.

jāhiliyāh – *an era of governance without God, the age of systemic lack of scriptural guidance*; it may be characterized as an “ignocracy” or “idiocracy.” It not only refers to the time preceding Muhammad (ﷺ), but also any time period in which Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* is overrun by other systems and establishments.

jamā'ah – *aggregation/congregation*; in a more exacting sense, it is the quorum of Muslims needed for a particular task or obligation.

jihad – *the ultimate effort and sacrifice*; it is not *holy war*. The word has a range of meanings and applications that range from a struggle against the forces of evil within the self to the a struggle against the forces of evil within the cosmos.

Jumu'ah – *the sixth day of the week, Friday*; the day of the week in which Muslims assemble for their weekly congregational sermon and service.

juz' – *volume*; the Qur'an has thirty *juz's*.

kāffatan – *all together, with no exceptions*.

kāfir – *a contrarian to Allah (ﷻ)*; every person who enlists in *kufr* becomes a *kāfir*. Plurals are *kāfirūn*, *kāfirīn*, and *kuffār*.

khaliḥ – *successor*; this word has its Qur’anic context. In this context man/humans are designated as Allah’s (ﷻ) successors on earth. In post-prophetic Islamic literature it refers to those who succeeded the Prophet (ﷺ) as the leader of the Muslims.

khilāḥ – *successorship*.

khilāḥ al-rāshidah – *the historical reference to the four leaders/successors to the Prophet (ﷺ): Abū Bakr, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.*

al-kitāb – *the divine Writ*; this word, in the context of the Qur’an, refers to the specific Qur’an itself while in other places it refers to generic scripture. The context in which it is used “fine-tunes” its meaning.

kufr – *denial of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and power*; this becomes a “philosophy” or an “ideology.” There is a mental construct of ideas that argue against Allah (ﷻ) as Sovereign, Lawgiver, and Authority. There may be many expressions of this contrarian hypothesis and political orientation; but one thing in common among all of them — bar none — is their exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) as the Almighty and the ultimate Authority.

la’nah – *curse, condemnation*.

Laylah al-Qadr – *the night of harmonization with (Allah’s – ﷻ) qadr*. It is a night understood to occur during the month of Ramaḍān, but pinpointing the exact night varies according to different *fiqhī* interpretations: it could be one of the nights in the last third of Ramaḍān, or one of the last ten nights, or one of the odd nights of the last 10 days, or most specifically the 27th night of Ramaḍān. According to some Sufi interpretations, it is a generic night that is qualified by *qadr*, the stasis or equilibrium of the human entity where all proportions of human existence are harmonized with the other elements of existence such as the *ghayb*, nature, the worlds of

past and present, etc. And by virtue of this view, it could be any night in the year or many nights during the year. It is the night in which the meanings of the Qur'an are more accessible so that such harmonization with Allah's (ﷻ) qadr is more within reach than on other days and nights.

Maghrib – sunset; usually, used to refer to the sunset *ṣalāh*.

mansūkh – abrogated; a suspended law.

al-masākīn – people who in spite of their best efforts in life remain poor; singular: *miskīn*.

masjid – the place or area of *sujūd* (prostrations); a mosque.

al-Masjid al-Ḥarām – the restricted sanctuary; also referred to as **al-Bayt al-Ḥarām** (the restricted house) or simply the **Ḥaram**; the Ḥaram in the generic sense is the Inviolable House of Allah (ﷻ) in Makkah — the Ka'bah. The perimeters of this Ḥaram extend to include most of Makkah.

mawlá – master, patron, client.

minbar – pulpit or podium; most of the time, this word refers to the platform from which the Jumu'ah sermon is delivered in the *masjid* each week. In a more general sense, it is just a raised platform to give prominence to the person on it.

mīqāt – timing.

mufassir – exegetist; one who explains the meanings of the Qur'an.

Muhājirūn – people forced out of their homelands; in particular, these are people who are forced out because of their scriptural convictions, strenuous efforts, and energetic attempts at socializing scripture. Generally in Islamic literature, this term refers to the Prophet's (ﷺ) companions who made the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah.

muḥarramāt – forbidden or unlawful things.

mujāhid – an individual active in jihad; see jihad above. Its plural is mujāhidūn or mujāhidīn.

munāfiq – a dual loyalist; those “Muslims” who are outwardly performing their part in a ritual Islam, but when it comes time to honor this Islam in its struggle and sacrifices, they show inclination towards the anti-Islamic camps, states or powers around. They feign Islam, while in reality they owe their allegiance to the representatives of *kufr*.

munkar – that which is self-evidently objectionable and offensive.

muṣalli – a person performing his ṣalāh.

mushrik – an individual(s) and people(s) who actively diminish the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and promote the authority of others. They equate worldly powers with Allah (ﷻ) and they denigrate Allah (ﷻ) as “one among many” deities and authorities.

mu‘takif – a person who is in a devotional retreat (in a masjid).

muttaqī – one who is actively conscious of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence and hence is always on the alert and on the defensive pertaining to Allah (ﷻ); this word should never be translated as pious or fearful, as it is known nowadays.

nafs – the bio-self.

naḥr – the slaughtering of an edible animal.

Naṣārā – theological Christians or political Christians (defined by context).

nastaghfir-allāh – We ask Allah (ﷻ) for forgiveness.

nawāfil – inessential, supererogatory.

nikāḥ – ceremonial and contractual marriage.

ni‘mah – bounty, blessing, favor.

qiblaḥ – the accommodating and unifying center that attracts the Muslims in their time of ṣalāḥ and devotional services. The Muslims’ qiblaḥ is Makkah.

qiṣās – requital, retribution: a penalty that corresponds to the crime.

qitāl – fighting, combat; this is in reference to the war-effort that is mandatory upon Muslims whenever the conditions and circumstances merit it.

al-Raḥīm – the Beneficent, the Merciful.

al-Raḥmān – the Mercy-Giving; this is one of Allah’s (ﷻ) ninety-nine attributes or names. The distinguishing feature about *al-Raḥmān* is that it stands apart from Allah’s (ﷻ) other attributes in as much as the word itself can only apply to Allah (ﷻ). Other attributes are “in a watered down sense” used to refer to human beings. But this one cannot be used to describe a human being. The reason is that it is only Allah (ﷻ) who can give mercy, and humans can only express it.

al-ra’īs al-mu’min – the believing or faithful president.

rak’aḥ – bowing during ṣalāḥ.

al-Razzāq – the Provider (of sustenance).

rizq – sustenance, subsistence.

rukū‘ – genuflection; unlike biblical genuflection, this is when a

Muslim in his *ṣalāḥ* bends down at the waist (a half *sajdah* or prostration) and praises Allah (ﷻ).

ṣabr – *patience, fortitude with endurance; when executing (killing) another human being, it means slow, torturous, execution.*

ṣadaqaḥ – *charity; the act of giving money or wealth without expecting to be financially compensated for it.*

sadd al-dharā'ī' – *prohibition of all (legal) means/channels leading to ḥarām.*

Ṣaḥīḥs, the two – *the compilation of hadiths collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim; the two most reliable reference books on hadith.*

sa'ī – *(the age of) assuming livelihood responsibilities; jogging between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ during Hajj and/or 'Umrah.*

al-sā'ibaḥ – *a vagrant camel, dedicated (or assigned) to the idols, never to be worked, its hair not to be trimmed, and its milk only to be given to guests.*

al-sā'ilīn – *those who ask (for livelihood expenses).*

sajdah – *prostration; plural: sujūd. This is one of the motions of ṣalāḥ, when a praying Muslim puts his forehead on the ground and glorifies the Almighty.*

ṣalāḥ – *expressing a concentrated and devotional relationship with Allah (ﷻ); Muslims do this five times a day: Fajr, Ṣuḥr, 'Aṣr, Maḡrib, and 'Ishā'.*

samāwāt – *skies, heavens; singular: samā'.*

ṣawm – *abstaining from food, water, and sex from dawn to night.*

sha‘ā’ir – rituals, ceremonies, rites; singular: sha‘īrah.

shahādah – testimonial; like other words, the variation in meaning depends on the context the word is used in. This word refers mostly to two concepts in Islamic literature. The first is the article of faith: *Ashhadu an lā ilāha illa Allah, wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allah*, which means “I bear witness [testify] that there is no deity/authority [worthy of conformity] except Allah, and I bear witness [testify] that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” The second concept related to the word *shahādah* is martyrdom.

shar‘ī – having to do with the Shari‘ah.

Shari‘ah – legal course; more technically, the codes, procedures, and laws that take society in the direction of prosperity and survival. The word originally meant — before the Qur’an was revealed — to take a path to a body of fresh water; now it generally refers to the body of Islamic law.

shirk – the act and implementation of equating or associating others with Allah (ﷻ) as divine and as authority.

shahīd – martyr; plural: shuhadā’.

silm – calm period, peacefulness.

Sīrah – biography of the Prophet (ﷺ); this is an account of his lifetime, particularly its struggle aspect, during his years in Makkah and Madinah.

al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm – the straight span; this is in reference to man’s meaningful and directional journey to Allah (ﷻ) during his life-long efforts and movements. It is a phrase used in every *ṣalāh* to focus a Muslim’s attention on the fact that he/she is pursuing a path that “leads to God.”

sufahā' – fools, simpletons, incompetent persons; singular: *safih*.

sunnah – social laws; plural: *sunan*. This is the word's Qur'anic meaning in so far as such laws are the pattern of history, human activities, and nature. *Sunan* also refers to a compilation of hadith collected and organized by a *muhadith*, one who searches hadith literature with a view to organizing and verifying hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Sunnah, the – the lifestyle pattern of the Prophet (ﷺ); or the final set of social laws imparted by Allah (ﷻ) to humanity through the agency of Muhammad (ﷺ).

sūrah – ensemble of a body of themes in the Qur'an; there are 114 *sūrah*s in the Glorious Qur'an.

tadhkiyah – conditional slaughter; to slaughter with Islamic guidance an edible animal that is dying so that it dies by means of slaughter and not by whatever else was causing the death (such as a fall from a cliff).

tafsir – exegesis; simple interpretation or critical interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'an.

ṭāghūt – concentration and abuse of power; this word is usually used to describe governments and regimes that, having accumulated wealth and resources, find themselves in a "superpower" or "hyperpower" position in the world. The exercise of this kind of centralized power makes these governments rivals (in their own consciousness) to the power and authority of Allah (ﷻ). This aggregation and engrossment of power becomes satanic.

ṭāghūti – adjective referring to *ṭāghūt*.

tamattu' – literally, enjoyment; in Hajj rituals it means performing the 'Umrah during the time (months) of Hajj, and then performing the Hajj directly afterward.

taqwá – the active self-consciousness of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence.

tarāwīḥ – repose and relaxation; in Ramaḍān, the long prayers at night, generally done in congregation at a masjid.

tashrīq – the days following the Day of Sacrifice (Yawm al-Naḥr) during the Hajj.

tawāf – circumambulation; generally refers to the movement of people around the Ka'bah.

tawḥīd – monotheism, singular divine authority; this combines in its connotational and denotational meanings all the consolidated and indivisible traits and understandings of Allah (ﷻ). In His self He is one; in His attributes He is one; therefore, in any way the human mind tries to understand Him, He remains exalted — as He distinguishes Himself in His own words.

al-uḍḥiyah – the sacrificial animal at the time of Hajj.

ummaḥ – the consolidation of a collective will.

Ummah – (uppercase reference is always to) the Islamic ummaḥ.

ummatan wasatā – the central ummaḥ (in reference to the Islamic ummaḥ among the rest of human societies).

'Umrah – the lesser Hajj: attending the Sacred Sanctuary in Makkah in a state of iḥrām, circling the Ka'bah, and jogging between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ (no standing at 'Arafāt is required).

'uṣbaḥ – clan solidarity or ethnic supremacy.

wirāthaḥ – inheritance.

waṣīyah – an inheritance will.

yarzuqu – provides sustenance.

yatabayyana – it becomes evident.

al-yatāmá – orphans; singular: yatīm.

Yawm al-Naḥr – the Day of Sacrifice.

Yawm ‘Arafāt – the day in which the Hajj pilgrims stand on the plateau of ‘Arafāt and make *du‘ā*. It is the most important ritual of Hajj, and a pilgrim’s Hajj is not complete without him observing this day.

zakāh – freely paying money as an act of financial maturity; usually the word is translated as *almsgiving* or *charity*, which not at all renders correctly its original meaning. Many times in the divine Writ the word *zakāh* is preceded by *aqāma*, *yuqīmūna*..., which means that this giving of money has to be institutionalized or regulated.

zālim – one who does *ẓulm*; a tyrant, oppressor.

ẓulm – *injustice/oppression*; this is the practical result, in human societies, of deleting Allah (ﷻ) as the only Authority and only Power in life. Many times in the divine Writ Allah (ﷻ) refers to *shirk* as being a massive expression of *ẓulm*. For those who are confused about who the *mushriks* are, they only need to look at parts of the world where there is colossal injustice and identify the operators of that injustice.

General Index

A

- A Tale of Two Cities* 381, 481
'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān 410
'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abi 'Uqbaḥ 91
'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālid ibn al-Walīd 303
'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās 110, 227, 325, 326, 350, 433, 454
'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ 459
'Abdullāh ibn Jaḥsh 264, 465
'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd 82, 303, 427
'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah 225
'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar 303, 326, 453, 459, 461, 475
'Abdullāh ibn Yazīd al-Anṣārī 303
Abraham (ﷺ), see Ibrāhīm (ﷺ)
Abramovich, Roman 425
Abu Ghraib 387, 483
Abyssinia 434
Abū al-Dardā' 225
Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī 303, 473
Abū Bakr 304, 314–15, 495
Abū Dāwūd 326, 427, 429, 430, 454, 457–59, 461, 473, 476
Abū Hurayrah 90, 418, 429, 435, 458–61, 473, 475
Abū Jahl 314
Abū Lahab 314
Abū Mūsā 90
Abū Ṣāliḥ 326
Abū Tha'labah al-Khashanī 453
Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī 457
Abū 'Uthman al-Nahdī 350
Abū Ya'lā 303
Adam (ﷺ) 245, 373, 391, 392
Adams, John 422
Adler, Felix 57, 417, 423
Advaita Vedanta 69, 419
Aeschylus 58, 417
Afghanistan 26, 73, 92, 186, 252, 301, 309, 333, 382, 430–31, 436
Afghan 430, 438
Africa iv, 26, 118, 119, 124, 131, 146–47, 159, 176, 308, 333, 346, 377, 397, 402, 432, 440, 477, 484
Afro-Asian 27, 77
agnostic 69

- Aguilera, Jaime Roldos 124
 al-Aḥzāb, Battle of, v, 96
 AIDS 181, 407
 ʿĀishah, Umm al-Muʿminin 165, 224, 458
 Albania 72, 425
 al-Albānī 459, 475
 Alexander, Cecil Frances Humphreys 479
 Algeria 26, 86, 186, 424, 434
 Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib 295, 315, 453, 495
 Imam ʿAlī 314
 Ali, John 442
 All Saints 241
 Allah's Apostle, *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Allah's Messenger, *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Allah's Prophet, *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Allende, Salvador 124, 439
 Alpha Lyrae 276, 468
 Vega 276, 468, 469
 Ambrose, Bishop of Milan 58, 378, 480
 America 26, 38, 73, 124, 128, 140, 148, 159, 372, 381–82, 394, 412, 416, 447, 449, 461–62, 472, 481–83
 American 5, 38, 45, 65, 68, 71, 73, 77, 123–24, 147–49, 180–83, 252–53, 306, 314, 347, 353, 363, 380–82, 386–87, 395, 413, 416–17, 425–27, 432, 435–36, 440–43, 447–49, 483
 United States 73, 85, 117, 123, 155, 158–59, 177–80, 201, 204, 241, 253, 347–48, 371, 394, 416, 428, 436, 438–43, 448, 451–55, 461–65, 480, 483
 USA 45, 154, 179, 205, 414–15, 441, 447–48, 470, 482
 American Midwest 353
 American, African 148–49, 395, 441–42, 448
 American, Chicano 148
 American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) 252
 AIPAC 253, 254, 411, 462
 ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir 295
 ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ 435, 459
 ʿAmr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍumari 224, 457
Analects, the 477
 Anas ibn Mālik 89, 125, 223–24, 227, 350, 413, 429–30, 444, 457–58, 478
 Anglo-American military axis 183
 Animal drugs 155, 452
 Anonymous 61, 393
 Antibiotics 155, 157, 159, 451
 apartheid 146, 301, 398, 400, 407, 440
 Apocrypha 58, 434
 Apostle (ﷺ), *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Apostles (ﷺ) 240, 392
 Aquinas, St. Thomas 200, 455
 Arab 42, 53, 85, 112, 118, 124, 148, 416, 425–28, 434, 437, 443
 Arabic ix, 63, 118, 331, 388, 415, 434
 Arab League 85
 Arab nationalism 118
 Arabian 14–15, 19, 28, 31, 42, 47–48, 51, 55, 63, 108, 153, 176, 196, 211, 255, 263, 279, 295–96, 323, 331, 334, 414, 416, 434–35, 492
 Arabian Peninsula 13, 16, 52, 109, 297, 308–10
 Peninsula, the 310, 337, 470
 Arabic language 45, 54, 176
 Arafat, Yasser 415
 al-Aʿraj 125, 444
 Arbenz, Jacobo 124, 438, 439
 Archdiocese 241
 Aristotle 456
 Ashkelon 183
 Asia 26, 159, 183, 308, 333, 377, 441, 452
 al-ʿĀṣī, Muḥammad H. iii, iv, xv
 ʿĀṣim ibn Sulaymān 106, 433
 Assumption, the 241, 376, 379
 atheism viii, 65, 68–73, 122, 127, 418, 424–25
 Soviet scientific 71
 atheist 67–74, 135, 425
 atheistic 68, 70–73, 229, 275, 371, 411
 Audubon Society 395
 Augustine, Saint 61
 Australia 147, 179

authoritarian 25, 398
 autocratic 181, 428, 471
 Azerbaijan 181–82

B

al-Baghdādī, Abū al-Faḍl Shahāb al-
 Dīn al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī xvi
 Balkans, the 333, 403
 Baltimore 241, 460
 Bangladesh 51, 94, 431, 438
 al-Bannā, Ḥassan 124, 437
 Banū Hāshim 295
 Banū Isrā'īl 47, 54, 75, 167, 169, 173,
 208, 384–85
 Children of Israel 116, 342, 385
 al-Barā' ibn 'Azīb 20
 al-Bashīr, 'Umar 413
 Basle, Switzerland 2, 410, 423
 Bechtel 180
 Belgium 156, 401, 403, 439
 Belgrade, Serbia 52
 Bellah, Robert 71, 425
 Ben-Eliezer, Binyamin 182
 Benedict XVI, Pope 414
 Benedictines 456
 Bennabi, Malek 118–22, 434
 Berezovsky, Boris 425
 Bernanke, Ben 411
 Besant, Annie 68, 419
 Bible, the 16, 36–39, 43, 50–51, 58,
 112, 115–18, 129, 195–98, 200–03,
 275, 352, 369, 422, 434, 487
 biblical 43, 58, 94, 114–15, 123,
 202, 378, 397, 492, 498
Book of Acts, the 379
Book of Job, 58
Corinthians 58, 478
 Gospel, the 202, 379
 New Testament 113, 119, 196, 198,
 370
Psalms 58, 460
 Bierce, Ambrose 58
 Biko, Stephen Bantu 124, 440
 Bilāl ibn Rabbāh 80, 239, 426
 Bilderbergs 140, 309, 446–48
 Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna 412
 Bloom, Allan 71, 425
 Boerne, Ludwig 58

Book of Acts, see the Bible
Book of Job, see the Bible
 Booth, John Wilkes 440
 Bosnia 24, 303, 472
 botulism 155, 161, 451–53
 bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 (BSE) 156
 BSE-tainted meat 156
 Mad-cow disease 156
 Bradlaugh, Charles 418
 Brennan, Gerald 58
 British Petroleum 180–81
 Browne, Lord 182
 BTC pipeline 181–83
 Buddhism 19, 69
 al-Bukhārī 325, 413, 418, 427, 429–30,
 433, 453–54, 457–58, 461, 471,
 473–78, 499
 Bulgars 197
 Buraydaḥ ibn al-Ḥaṣīb al-Aslamī 473
 Bush, George W. 73, 462, 483
 Byzantine 146, 417

C

Cairo 118, 177, 179, 204, 434
 calendar 266, 279, 282–91, 338, 472,
 488
 Gregorian 283–90, 472
 Islamic 283–85, 289–91, 472
 Julian calendar 286, 472
 Campylobacteriosis 155, 451
 Camus, Albert 71, 424
 Canada iv, 179, 452, 454
 Canterbury 40, 52
 capitalism 73, 158, 229, 265, 398, 400,
 408, 422
 capitalist 117, 143, 252, 301–02,
 309, 353, 359, 363, 383, 398
 Capitol Hill 140, 251, 361
 Carlyle, Thomas 59
 Carmichael, Stokely 394, 483
 Carvaka 69, 420
 Caspian Sea 181–83
 Catholic 13, 40, 118, 146–47, 198,
 240, 242, 412, 431
 Catholicism 240
 Roman Catholic 40, 147, 198, 412,
 414, 456, 478

- Catholic Church 287, 414, 456, 460, 478
 Church, the 25, 39, 122, 179, 197–98, 201, 241–42, 370, 378–79, 412, 421, 459, 479
 Caucasus, the 333, 383
 Caucuses 333
 Celtic 19
 Center for Public Integrity 250
 Central Asia 183, 308, 333
 Ceyhan-Tblisi-Baku (BTC) oil pipeline, *see* BTC pipeline
 Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline 180
 Chechnya 26, 92, 301, 309, 333, 430
 Chechen 430
 Ichkeria 333
 Cheney, Dick 42, 416
 Cheney, Lynne 42, 416
 Chernin, Peter 411
 Chevron 180, 182
 Children of Israel, *see* Banū Isrā'īl
 Chile, Republic of 439
 China 70, 73, 179, 204, 346, 445, 452, 477
 Chinese 67, 132, 158, 282–85, 420, 435, 477
 Chinese Cultural Revolution 477
 Chitepo, Herbert 124, 440
 Chossudovsky, Michel 182, 454
 Christ, *see* Jesus (ﷺ)
 Christian viii, 10, 12–13, 16–19, 25, 36–43, 46, 65, 111–14, 117, 119, 121–22, 128, 139, 153, 171, 173, 188, 195–205, 212, 240, 284, 287, 301, 303, 352, 368–72, 377, 379–80, 394, 422–23, 434–35, 440, 442, 459–60, 466, 471, 479–80, 484–85, 487, 497
 Christianity 19, 40, 73, 112, 114, 119, 121, 370–71, 422, 472, 479
 trinitarian 119
 Eastern Orthodox 40, 472
 Orthodox Greeks 146
 Protestant 40, 147, 431, 472, 479
 Christmas 240–42, 287, 459–60
 CIA 309, 416, 430, 436–42, 446
 Ciardi, John 59
 Cicero 59
 Civil Rights Movement 442
 Clinton, Bill 415, 448
 colonialists 146
 Colorado 387, 482
 Columbine High School 482
 Commission for Racial Equality 397, 484
 Committee of 300, the 140, 310, 448
 condensation 132, 446
 Confucius 421, 477
 Confucians 346
 Congo, the 333, 439
 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 479
 Congregation of the Holy Office of the Inquisition 479
 Congress 250–51, 253, 410, 436, 462–63
 Congreve, William 59
 Conoco-Phillips 182
 Consultative Council 86, 428
 Majlis al-Shura 428
 consumerism 155, 157, 327
 Copernican system 466
 Copernicus, Nicolas 270, 465
Corinthians, *see* the Bible
 Coriolis force 133, 446
 Corporation for Public Broadcasting 481
Corpus Christi 434
 cosmology 131, 271, 273, 444
 Cotton, Nathaniel 59
 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) 140, 310, 447
 Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) 442
 Covenant, the 1–3, 12–15, 32, 173, 195, 198, 203, 206, 217, 230, 372, 383, 493
 covenant bearers 2, 195, 372
 Crusades, the 32, 124, 301
 Cyprus 333
 Cyradan Palace 182
 czars 117
- D**
 Da'wah parties 80, 426
 Dagestan 333

- Darfur 181, 333
 Dark Ages 25
 Darwin, Charles 274, 276, 468
 Darwinism 275, 276, 468
 Dāwūd (داود) 409
 Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣīne 125, 444
 Day of Accountability 75, 140, 363
 Day of Judgment 112
 Final Day 174–75, 386
 Last Day 103, 172–74, 279, 309, 465
 Resurrection Day 102, 126, 139,
 342–43, 386–89
 De Rerum Natura 69, 420
 Deism 70, 412, 421, 425
 Deist 70, 144, 422
 Democritus 69, 386, 420
 Department of Defense 251, 303
 Department of Homeland Security 251
 Department of Justice 252
 Department of the Treasury 425
 Department of Transportation 481
 Descartes 421
Deuteronomy, see the Torah
 Deutsche Volkunion 403, 485
 Devil, see Satan
 d'Holbach, Baron 70, 422
 dialectical materialism 386, 482
 Dickens, Charles 381, 481
 Diderot, Denis 59
 Die Republikaner 485
 Diethylstilbestrol (DES) 451
 diktat 42
 divine Writ, see the Qur'an
 Ḍiyā' al-Muqaddasī 461
 Dobbs, Lou 461
 Dominican order 456
 Dostoyevsky, Fyodr 71, 424
 Douglas, Norman 59
 Duke, Elizabeth A. 411
 Dumas, Alexander 59
- E**
 Earth, the 2, 4, 5, 15, 34, 36, 43, 51,
 55, 63, 66, 89, 94, 101–02, 117, 127,
 129–38, 141–44, 147, 174, 177, 194,
 203, 212–13, 218, 229–30, 233, 250,
 262, 266–68, 272–73, 277–86,
 289–92, 294, 297–99, 306–08, 316,
 327, 330–32, 339, 344, 351–56, 361,
 364, 378, 384, 386, 388, 392–95,
 401, 405, 409, 411, 421, 444, 446,
 466–71, 488, 495
 East London 149
 Easter 240, 282, 286, 287, 459, 472
 Ecuador 439
 Egypt 51, 119, 177–79, 292, 345, 349,
 414, 437, 465, 477
 Egyptian 27, 117–18, 131, 179, 429,
 434, 437, 454
 Egyptian Bread Riots 454
 Eilat 183
 Einstein, Albert 270–71, 467
 Ember Days 241, 460
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo 59, 417
 England, see Great Britain
 Engle, Paul 59
 ENI (Italian oil company) 182
 Enlightenment, the 422, 440, 456
 Epicurus 69, 386, 420
Equus asinus 164
Escherichia coli 0157:H7 155, 450
 ethnicity viii, 14, 91, 142, 145–51, 401,
 408
 ethnic cleansing 149, 401, 479
 ethnic identity 146–47, 148
 ethnic minority 146, 395, 397
 ethnic monitoring 149, 396
 ethnicism 15, 31
 Europe 25–26, 38, 45, 68, 72, 127–28,
 140, 153, 158, 179–80, 235, 287,
 301, 333, 370, 380–81, 394, 398,
 400–03, 410, 424, 435, 445, 448,
 466, 472
 Europe, Eastern 72, 333, 380,
 401–03
 Europe, Western 398, 400, 402, 424
 Europeans 17, 179, 431, 472, 484
 evangelists 117
 Eve (حوا) 242, 373, 391
 Evidence Amendment Act of 1869 68,
 418
Exodus, see the Torah
 Exxon 180

F

Fahd, King 85–86, 427
 Faisal, King 124, 437
 Far East, the 333
 FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation, US) 442–43
 Federal Reserve 411–12, 441, 473
 Feuerbach, Ludwig 70, 422
 Fez, Morocco 85, 427
 Fez Summit Peace Proposal 427
 Final Day, *see* Day of Accountability
 Findley, Paul 253, 462
 Flower, Ken 440
Fi Zīlāl al-Qurʾān xvi, 473, 474, 475, 476
 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) 155, 348
 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) 253
 France 118, 146, 156, 182, 401–03, 422, 434, 454, 460, 479, 482, 484
 Paris 19, 40, 45, 77, 421, 424, 434, 456
 Frankish conquerors 146
 Franklin, Benjamin 413, 422
 Franciscans 456
 Freemasonry 413–15
 Freemasons 140, 414
 Masonic world order 38
 French Revolution 381
 Freud, Sigmund 70, 72, 74, 276, 368, 422–23
 Fridays of Advent 240, 459
 Friedman, Mikhail 425
 Front National 403, 484

G

Gabriel (جبرائيل) 109, 112, 326
 galaxy 131
 Galilei, Galileo 270, 421, 466, 479
 Gaza (Ghazzah) 42, 253, 454, 462–65
 Geithner, Timothy 412
 General Relativity 270, 467
 Genesis 198, 270, 276, 433, 456
 Geneva 38, 476
 Geneva conventions 483
Gentian violet 452

Georgia 181–84, 333
 Geostrophic wind 133, 446
 Germany 148, 156, 398–03, 417, 422–24, 435, 438, 447–48, 454, 466–67
 Gerondi, Jonah 59
 Ghazzah, *see* Gaza
 Gilroy, Paul 149, 449
 Glasgow, Douglas 394
 globalists 151
 Goliath 62
 Gospel, *see* the Bible
 Gothic 387
 Great Britain 147, 149, 182, 401, 445, 447–49, 472
 England 68, 421, 435, 442, 460
 London iii, 19, 38, 40, 45, 77, 149, 418–23, 430, 442, 447, 449, 457, 470, 484
 UK 73, 147, 156, 396–97, 414, 418, 422, 428, 435, 437, 447, 449, 457, 470, 484
 Great Depression, the 382
 Great Society, the 480
 Greece 69–70, 418, 472
 Greek 67, 417–18, 420, 479, 480
 Greeks 146, 147, 444
 Gregorian 282–91, 472
 Gregory XIII, Pope 286, 472
 Gregory, Saint 61
 Grey, Brad 411
 Growth promoters 155–57, 451
 Guantanamo Bay 483
 Guatemala 438–39
 Guevara, Ernesto “Che” 124, 439
 Gulf of Tonkin 123, 436
 Gulf, “oil-rich” 73, 436
 Gusinsky, Vladimir 425

H

Ḥaḍramawt 82
 al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf 410
 al-Ḥakīm, Ayatullah ‘Abd al-‘Azīz 426
 al-Ḥakīm, Ayatullah Muḥammad Bāqir 426
 Halliburton 180
 Hamas 253, 415, 429, 463–65

- Hamilton, Alexander 422
 Hamilton, Charles V. 394, 483
 Hampton, Fred 124, 440
 Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib 295
 Ḥamzah ibn 'Amr al-Aslamī 224
 Harris, Eric 387, 482
 Hatshepsut 131
 Hayer, Talmadge 442
 Hebrew 112, 196, 198, 200, 369, 378
 Hebrew Bible, *see* the Torah
 Herzl, Theodor 410
 Hijāz 109
 Hinduism 412, 419, 420
 Hindu 188, 282, 285, 412 479
 Hizbullāh 182, 429, 455
 war against 182
 Hobbes, Thomas 70, 421–22
 Hājar 109–10
 Hollywood 136, 140–41, 299, 360–61,
 366, 370, 385, 387, 411, 482
 Holy Sanctuary, *see* al-Masjid
 al-Ḥarām
 Holy See, *see* the Vatican
 Holy Sepulcher 13
 Homer 59
 Hoover, Herbert C. 59
 Hoover, J. Edgar 413
 Horn of Africa 176
 Ḥudaybiyah, Treaty of 319–20, 470
 Hussein, Saddam 45, 86, 123, 414,
 416, 426, 436, 470, 472, 483
 Hutcheson, Francis I. 60
 Hūd 137
- I**
 Ibn al-'Arabī 125, 444
 ibn 'Ashūr, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir xvi
 ibn Bāz, 'Abd al-Azīz ibn 'Abdillāh 470
 Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī 453, 475
 Ibn Jarīr xvi, 239
 Ibn Kathīr xv
 Ibn Khaldūn 346, 477, 478
 Ibn Mājāh 435, 458, 459, 461, 475
 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah 315, 474
 Ibn al-Qayyim 453, 474
 Ibn Umm Maktūm 239
 Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) 10, 12, 15–16, 20, 28, 36,
 53, 67, 108–10, 172, 280, 307, 314,
 316, 317, 322, 409, 474
 Abraham (ﷺ) 31, 36, 124, 433, 440
 Iceland 94, 432
 Ichkeria, *see* Chechnya
 Iger, Robert 411
 Imam xv, 45, 49, 234, 249, 314, 383,
 394, 474, 481, 482
 Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal 328, 459,
 461, 478
 Imam Mālik 165, 166, 227
 imperialism 16–17, 73, 364, 372, 408,
 437, 449
 imperialist 16, 27, 43–45, 182, 184,
 212, 382, 471
 imperialist industrial complex 27
 India 69–70, 419, 426, 432, 479
 Indonesia 51, 94, 333, 432
 Indult 241–42
 Infectious hepatitis 155, 450
 Inquisition 370, 466, 478–79
 Medieval 479
 Portuguese 479
 Roman 479
 Spanish 479
 Intelligent Design, Theory of 275
 International Bank for Reconstruction
 and Development, *see* World Bank
 International Development
 Association 353, 478
 International Monetary Fund (IMF)
 38, 177, 353, 414, 454, 484
 internationalists 151
 Intifada 415
 Iran-Iraq War 428, 430
 First Gulf War 416
 Iraq 73, 80, 123, 252, 301, 303, 309,
 333, 345, 382, 387, 410, 414–17,
 426, 436, 443, 462, 472–73, 481–83
 al-'Irāqī 426
 Ireland 94, 156, 431
 Irish 146, 147, 397, 431
 'Īsā (ﷺ), *see* Jesus (ﷺ)
 Islam 2, 3, 6, 11–18, 28, 30, 33–40, 43,
 44–47, 49–52, 76, 79, 82, 84, 92, 93,
 106–08, 112–15, 118, 122, 125, 171,
 186–87, 209–10, 216, 222–23, 229,
 246, 255, 263–65, 281, 283, 286,

- 295–302, 306, 308, 310–12, 318, 323, 326, 329–33, 339, 359, 362, 372, 381, 399, 404–08, 414, 418, 441–43, 462, 471, 479, 481, 497
- Islamic calendar, *see* calendar
- Islamic East 333, 414
- Islamic Republic of Iran xvi, 26, 204
- Islamic Revolution in Iran 309, 426, 437
- Islamic society 43, 51, 62–63, 92, 193, 204, 215, 248, 263, 355, 358–360, 364–67, 488
- civilization 55, 128, 367, 368
- social order 222, 314, 359, 367
- social system 359, 360
- Islamic State 23, 76, 92, 98, 208, 309, 359
- Islamic ideology 63
- Islamic movement iv, 29, 37, 50, 80, 297, 309, 349, 359, 434, 437
- Islamic parties 80
- Islamic world order 92–93, 267
- Islamists 5, 17
- Ismā'il (ﷺ) 10, 15–16, 53, 109, 280, 314, 322, 474
- Israel 11, 45, 50, 85, 116, 179, 182–183, 198, 202, 252–53, 342, 369, 372, 385, 405, 411, 415, 425, 427, 437, 441–44, 455, 462–65
- Israeli 1, 2, 15–16, 42, 45, 47–50, 178, 182–84, 209, 253, 314, 385, 414–17, 427–29, 437, 441, 454–55, 462–65, 481
- Jewish State 253, 410
- Zionist Israel 85
- Zionist State 2, 202
- Israeli-Turkish pipeline 183
- Istanbul 40, 182
- Italy 156, 182, 398–402, 431, 436, 447, 454–55, 466, 479–80
- Italian 148, 287–88, 436
- J**
- Jainism 69, 419
- Jamaat-e-Islami 80, 426
- James, William 60
- Japan 156, 179, 435, 447, 454
- Jeddah 47, 52, 77
- Jefferson, Thomas 422
- Jerusalem, *see* al-Quds
- Jesus (ﷺ) 116–21, 139, 153, 198–99, 246, 286, 370, 422, 434
- Christ 117, 139, 197, 198–201, 240, 370, 379, 412, 459
- ʿĪsā (ﷺ) 80, 409
- Jesus Christ 198
- Jesus, son of Mary (ﷺ) 121
- Jewish State, *see* Israel
- Jews 10, 16–17, 36–43, 46–47, 50–51, 112–14, 119, 139, 146, 196–97, 203, 205, 212, 369–72, 400, 410, 415–17, 449, 479, 487
- Jewish viii, 11, 17, 25, 34, 36, 47, 51, 111–13, 159, 167, 171, 195–96, 202, 205, 253, 282, 285, 370, 372, 380, 394, 410–12, 416–17, 425, 460, 464–65, 482
- Judaism 49, 73, 112–14, 369–70, 479
- Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh 164, 223–24, 453–54, 457, 475–76
- John Locke 68, 418
- John Paul II, Pope 412, 414
- Johnson, Lyndon 413, 436, 480
- Jonson, Ben 421
- Jordanian 429
- Judaism, *see* Jews
- Judas Iscariot 120
- Judean Mountains 11
- Judeo-Christian 19, 37–39, 117, 196, 202, 204, 303, 369, 372, 380, 471
- Judge, William Quan 412
- Julian calendar, *see* calendar
- Jupiter 130
- Jurham, tribe of 110
- K**
- Ka'b ibn Mālik 429
- Kabala 412
- Kadyrov, Akhmad 430
- Kant, Immanuel 200, 417, 456
- Karā' al-Ghamīm 223
- Kashmir 24, 333, 364
- Kennedy, John F. 124, 440–41
- Kepler, Johannes 270, 466
- Kepler's laws 466

Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt 81, 427
 Khan, Liaquat Ali 124, 437
 Khaybar 164
 Khodorkovsky, Mikhail 425
 al-Khomeini, al-Imam 45, 383, 481–82
 King James Version 58, 433, 456, 478
 King, Martin Luther 124, 442
 Klebold, Dylan 387, 482
 Kodashim 12
 Kohn, Donald 411
 Kosovo 24
 Kremlin 383
 Kristol, Irving 481
 Kroszner, Randall 411
 Ku Klux Klan 398, 441
 Kuwait 45, 86, 123, 416, 428, 436, 470
 Kyrgyzstan 333

L

Last Day, *see* Day of Accountability
 Latin America 26, 124, 159, 412
 Lauder, Ron 411
 Laws 68
 Lebanon xvi, 26, 86, 182–84, 414, 428, 444, 453–55, 473–76
 Southern Lebanon 86, 427, 455
 Leibnitz, Gottfried W. von 60
 Lent 195, 240, 241, 242, 459, 460
 Levant, the 119
 Levinson, Leonard L. 60
 liberation theology 18, 379, 412
 Littleton, Colorado 387
 lobbying 250–52, 461
 lobbies 17, 148, 252–54
 lobby 39, 250, 251, 461, 462
 lobbyists 250–52
 Lokayata 69, 70, 420
 London, *see* Great Britain
 Lord's Supper 379
 Lucretius 69, 420
 Lumumba, Patrice 124, 440
 Lynton, Michael 411

M

Mad-cow disease, *see* bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)
 Madinah 10, 18, 20–22, 32, 40, 45–46,

52, 62, 66, 77, 98, 105, 107, 176, 193, 265, 280–81, 296, 300, 308, 316–19, 335, 339, 350, 359, 470, 474, 496, 500
 Medina 113
 Madison Avenue 353
 Madison, James 422
 Magellanic Clouds 131
 al-Mahdī, Imam 80
 Maimonides, Moses 60
 Majlis al-Shura, *see* Consultative Council
 Makkah vii, viii, 6, 10–21, 28–30, 34–46, 49–52, 62–66, 76–77, 81, 105–10, 119, 128, 172–76, 223, 225, 258, 260, 265–66, 290, 293–96, 300, 307, 316–21, 324–27, 332–36, 339, 350, 359–60, 433–34, 470, 474–75, 491, 496, 498, 500
 Mecca 112
 Malaysia 26, 414
 Malcolm X 124, 441, 442
 Mansur, Sheikh 430
 al-Manṣūrī, Muṣṭafā al-Ḥiṣun xvi
 Marx, Karl 70, 72, 74, 368, 420, 422
 Marxist-Leninist 71
 Maryam (مريم) 119, 246
 Maryland 241, 415, 443, 460, 472
 Masada 51, 417
 Masonic world order, *see* Freemasonry
 materialism 157, 272, 297, 327, 332, 337, 382, 386, 422, 482
 materialist 6, 41, 70, 132–33, 171, 264, 276, 386, 421
 materialistic 24, 69, 160, 169, 272, 301, 327, 363, 369, 382, 390, 394
 Matthew, Saint 199, 412, 478
 Mawdūdī, Sayyid Abū al-A'āl 426
 McKinney, Cynthia 253, 462
 McNally, Terence 434
 Mecca, *see* Makkah
 Medieval Inquisition, *see* Inquisition
 Medina, *see* Madinah
 Mediterranean 132, 181–83
 Mesopotamia 119
 Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Mexican 148

Meyer, Barry 411
 MGM 411
 Middle Ages 202, 287
 Middle East, the 42, 85, 183–84, 253, 443, 462
 Middle Eastern 472
 Milky Way 131, 276
 Milton, John 60
 Miná 315, 320, 328, 433
 Minard, Peter 60
 Miramax Films 411, 482
 Mishkin, Frederic S. 411
 Montaigne, Michel de 60
 months of sanctity, *see al-ashhur al-hurum*
 Moon, the 130, 136, 260, 262, 267, 273, 278–91, 314, 440, 469–71
 Moonves, Leslie 411
 Morocco 85, 414
 Mosaic law, *see* Moses (ﷺ)
 Moscow 40, 424, 430
 Moses (ﷺ) 115, 384
 Mosaic law 198–99
 Mūsá (ﷺ) 90, 374, 409
 Mossad 253, 436, 443–44
 Mount ‘Arafāt 318, 328, 330, 334, 433
 Muhammad (ﷺ) v, 9–12, 16, 28–29, 32, 35–36, 41, 43, 47, 49, 53–54, 57, 63, 76, 90, 112–17, 122, 125, 128, 167, 171, 295, 316, 318, 334, 409, 494, 500–01
 Allah’s Apostle (ﷺ) 20, 82
 Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) 3, 12, 23, 312, 315, 328
 Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) 42, 122, 225, 314, 315, 325
 Apostle (ﷺ) v, 6, 8, 13, 20, 23, 27, 29, 54, 82, 164, 239, 342, 407
 Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) 20, 239
 Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) 91, 164, 224, 225, 328, 500
 Muhammadi 13, 49, 172, 246, 322
 Prophet (ﷺ), xv, 5, 10–11, 14, 20, 23, 28, 33–36, 39, 41, 43, 46–51, 63–64, 80–81, 88–91, 107–12, 164–65, 215, 221–25, 230–35, 244–46, 260–66, 283, 303–04, 311, 314–19, 323–29, 359, 407, 426, 435, 495

 Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) 224, 303, 328
 Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) 43, 223
 Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf 433
 multinational 180, 250
Al-Muqataṭaf min ‘Uyūn al-Tafāsīr xvi
 Mūsá (ﷺ), *see* Moses (ﷺ)
 Muslim political action groups 253
 al-Muzdalifah 328–29, 334–35

N

Najāshī 119, 434
 Negus 119, 434
 Napoleon I 60
 nation-state 18, 24, 63, 146, 388, 414
 nationalism vii, 6, 14–16, 26, 30–31, 51, 53, 63, 91, 118, 145–49, 398, 400, 408, 419
 nationalist 15, 27, 29, 31, 47, 118, 151, 401–02, 435, 484–85
 nationalistic 14, 16, 29, 91, 301, 324
 nationality 15, 28, 146–49, 204, 467
 native American 147
 NATO 182, 184, 309
 Natural Resources Defense Council 395
 natural theology 18, 412
 al-Nawawī 474
 NBC Universal 411
 Negus, *see* Najāshī
 Neibuhr, Reinhold 60
 Netanyahu, Benjamin 415
 Netherlands, the 156
 New Delhi 52
 New Testament, *see* the Bible
 New York 38, 117, 412, 418, 425, 434, 436, 457, 465, 468, 473, 481, 483–84
 New Zealand 179
 News Corporation 411
 Newton, Isaac 271, 276, 466–67
 Nicholas I, Pope 197
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 70–74, 368, 423
 Nigeria 51
 al-Nisā’i 427, 457–61
 North Africa 118–19, 346, 402, 477, 484
 North America 26
 Nūh (ﷺ) 409

O

Obama, Barack 412, 449, 472, 483
 Olcott, Henry Steel 412
 Operation Desert Storm 428
 orthodox 18, 40, 146, 410, 472, 479
 Oswald, Lee Harvey 440
 Ottoman State 364, 399, 414
 Oxford University 434

P

Paine, Thomas 412, 422
 Pakistan 80, 309, 333, 426, 430,
 437–38
 Pakistani 148, 438
 Palestine 2, 24, 26, 109, 173, 186, 333,
 364, 410, 415, 417
 Palestinians 2, 42, 415–16, 427, 454,
 462–65
 Palestine Liberation Organization
 (PLO) 42, 415, 470
 Palestinian National Authority 42
 Paley, William 412
 Paraclete 115
 Parahemolytic food poisoning 155, 450
 parallax second (parsec) 444
 Paramount Pictures 411, 482
 Paris, *see* France
 Parker, Trey 482
 Paul, Saint 198, 379
 Pearl Harbor 123, 435
 Pentecost 241, 460
 People of the Book, *see* *Ahl al-Kitāb*
 percolation 446
 Perfringens food poisoning 155, 451
 Persia 51, 310
 Pesticides 155, 452
 Peter, Saint 197
 Pharisees 202
 Philippines 123, 333, 417, 435
 Phoenicians 132
 phyletic gradualism 274, 468
 physicalism 386, 482
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 436
 Plato 68, 412, 418
 Poles 147
Political MoneyLine 250
 Pompeii 94, 431

Pontius Pilate 120, 435
 Portugal 156, 479
 Portuguese Inquisition, *see* Inquisition
 Positive Law 456
 Potanin, Vladimir 425
 potato famine 94, 431
 precipitation 132, 134, 337, 446
 Prophet (ﷺ), *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Prophet of Allah (ﷺ), *see*
 Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Prophets (ﷺ) v, 117, 174, 378, 393,
 404, 409, 487
 Protestant, *see* Christianity
 Protozoa 450
Psalms, *see* the Bible
Pulp Fiction 387, 482
 punctuated equilibria 275, 468
 Putin, Vladimir 425

Q

al-Qaṣwá 329
 Qatādaḥ 416
 al-Quds 10–16, 21, 28–30, 33–34,
 48–49, 317, 324, 339, 413
 Jerusalem 10–21, 33, 40–41, 49–52,
 113, 172–175, 379, 413, 415, 427
 Qur'an, the iii–xiii, 1–6, 10, 12, 21–36,
 39, 41–45, 49–58, 61–65, 76, 78, 81,
 84, 87, 90, 104–130, 134, 145,
 149–51, 160–63, 167–76, 185, 187,
 192–96, 203–04, 208–09, 215, 217,
 226, 229, 230, 235–39, 246, 249,
 253, 260, 262, 265–71
 divine Writ 43, 45, 62, 72, 84, 98,
 103, 108, 111, 114, 152, 168, 170,
 344, 495, 503
 Scripture, the 1, 43, 54, 61, 64, 111,
 115, 117, 170, 173–74, 405
 Quraysh 295–96, 300, 333–35, 474
 Qurayshī 14, 296, 334
 al-Qurṭubī xv
 Quṭb, Sayyid xvi, 473–76

R

rabbis 19, 38, 49, 117, 202
 Race Relations Act of 1976 147, 448,
 484

- racism vii, ix, 4, 6, 16–17, 31, 33, 54,
 129, 147–50, 371, 390, 393–404,
 408, 441, 449
 racial viii, 14, 27, 30, 49–51, 147–51,
 173, 299, 301, 355, 368, 395, 397,
 402–04, 415, 448, 474, 480, 484
 racist 31, 49–50, 147–48, 175, 368,
 372, 393, 395, 397, 401–404
 al-Raḥmān, Dr. As'ad 'Abd 42, 415
 Rahman, Sheikh Mujibur 124, 438
 Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ), *see* Muhammad (ﷺ)
 Rathenau, Walter 448
 Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph 414
 see also Benedict XIV
 Ray, James Earl 442
 al-Rāzī xv, 477
 Red Sea 176, 183
 Resurrection Day, *see* Day of
 Accountability
 Retinger, Joseph 446
 Rhodesian Central Intelligence
 Organization 440
 Rice, Condoleezza 177, 184, 454,
 462–64, 483
 Riḍā, Muḥammad Rashīd xvi
 Riyadh 47, 52, 77, 86, 427–28
 RMS Lusitania 123, 435
 Roldos, Jaime 124, 439
 Roman Catholic, *see* Catholic
 Roman Empire 197, 287
 Roman Inquisition, *see* Inquisition
 Romano-Gaelic 146
 Rome 40, 51–52, 287, 456
 Roosevelt, Franklin Delano 435
 Rossetti, Christina 61
 Ruby, Jack 441
Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-
'Aẓīm wa al-Sab'ī al-Mathānī xvi
 Russell, William Huntington 448
 Russia 73, 179, 183, 382, 425, 430,
 454, 463, 472, *see also* Soviet Union,
 USSR
 Russian Federation, *see* Soviet Union
- S**
 Sabbath 113, 202
 al-Sadat, Anwar 178
 Sadducees 202
 al-Safārīnī al-Hanbalī 461
 Safia 113
 Sa'id ibn al-Mussayab 350
 Ṣalāḥuddīn 45
 Salmān al-Fārsī 233, 461
 Salmonellosis 155, 450
 Samuraḥ ibn Jandab 239, 459
 Ṣana'a' 82
 Santayana, George 61
 Sartre, Jean-Paul 70–72, 424
 Satan viii, ix, 4, 39, 102, 104, 139–44,
 151, 168–69, 245, 326, 341, 358–60,
 363, 369–77, 382–83, 385
 Devil 361, 369–72, 382, 420
 satanic 117, 139, 143–44, 158, 177,
 306, 369, 371, 376, 501
 Shayṭān 372–76, 380, 382, 387
 Saudi Arabia 42, 85, 176, 209, 279,
 292, 372, 427–28, 437, 470
 Saudi 16–19, 27, 39, 40–42, 45–52,
 65, 76, 85–86, 110, 176, 209, 254,
 279, 292, 314, 322–23, 327,
 334–35, 372, 427–29, 433, 437,
 470–71
 Sawād ibn Hanṣalāḥ 239
 Schnitzler, Arthur 61
 SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic
 Revolution in Iraq) 80, 426
 Scripture, *see* the Qur'an
 secularism 1, 40, 122, 229, 271,
 287–88, 419, 426, 481
 secular 19, 47, 69, 76, 84, 118, 125,
 132–35, 160, 178, 187, 200,
 206–212, 240, 243–44, 271, 306,
 380, 383, 390, 394, 412, 420, 426,
 438, 471–72, 479
 secularist 77, 201, 418, 438
 Serbian 472
 Serbs 303
 Sezer, Ahmet Necdet 182
 al-Sha'bi 106, 433
 Shāhīn, Dr. 'Abd al-Ṣubūr 117–18,
 122, 434
 Shariati, Ali 124, 437
 Sharon, Ariel 415, 449
 Shaukat, Syed Khalid 470
 al-Shawkānī 416

- Shayṭān, *see* Satan
 Shell 130, 180
 Shelley, Percy 68, 418
 Shī'ab Abū Ṭālib 295
 Shigellosis 155, 450
 Shiraz 52
 Shu'bah 239
 sidreal month 471
 Sierra Club 395
 Sikhs 146
 Sixtus I, Pope 60
 Skull and Bones Society 140, 310, 448
 Sloan, Harry 411
 Smolensky, Alexander 425
 social justice 37, 121, 203, 232, 254, 481
 Sodom and Gomorrah 366
 Solar System 130, 267, 444, 466
 Solomon's Temple 40, 413, 414
 Somalia 26, 309, 333
 Sony Pictures 411
 Sorbonne 44
 South Africa iv, 146–47, 432, 440
 South Asians 147
South Park 387, 482
 South Yemen 72, 425
 Southeren Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) 442
 Southern Africa 308
 Soviet Union 72–73, 179, 401–02, 438, 440
 Soviet 67, 71–73, 86, 92, 135, 179, 182, 184, 401–02, 418, 430–31, 438, 440
 Russian Federation 182, 425
 Supreme Soviet 71
 USSR 71, 438, 440
 Spain 156, 398–400, 477, 479
 Spanish Inquisition, *see* Inquisition
 Spanish-American War 123, 417, 435
 Staphylococcal food poisoning 155, 450
 Stein, Joel 411
 Sudan 26, 181, 186, 333, 413
 Sufyān 433
 Suḥayb ibn Sinān al-Rūmī 350
 Sun, the 130–31, 136, 223–25, 273, 276–90, 329, 466–71
 superpower 73, 299, 382, 501
 Switzerland 2, 156, 410, 476
 synodic month 285, 471
 Syria xvi, 183–84, 345, 455
 System of Nature, The 70
- T**
 al-Ṭabarī xv, xvi
 Ṭabāṭabā'i, 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn xvi
 Tabūk, expedition to 96, 315
Taenia solium 159
Tafsīr al-Kashshāf xvi
Tafsīr al-Manār xvi
al-Tafsīr al-Munīr xvi, 453, 473, 475
Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī xvi
al-Tahrīr wa al-Tamwīr xvi
 Talmudic law 202
 Talmudics 117
 Tarantino, Quentin 482
 Tarullo, Daniel 411
 Tel Aviv 40, 45, 52, 444
 Ten Commandments, the 306
 Tether, Gordon 447
 Thailand 333, 432
The Arab Dream 42, 416
The Atheist 71, 72
The Brothers Karamazov 71, 424
The Closing of the American Mind 71, 425
 theism 69, 70
 theology 18, 371, 379, 408, 412, 422, 449, 460, 477
 theosophy 18, 412, 419
 Thera 94, 431
 Thoreau, Henry David 61
 Thyroid gland contamination 452
 al-Tirmidhī 413, 427, 457–61, 473–76
 Torah, the 167, 196, 210
 Deuteronomy 115, 195, 456
 Exodus 195, 456
 Hebrew Bible 198, 200, 369
 totalitarianism 25
 traditionalists 18
Trichinella spiralis 158
 Trichinosis 158–59, 451
 Trilateral Commission 140, 310,

447–48
 Turkey 26, 154, 181–84, 414, 453,
 455, 481

U

‘Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit 458
 Uḥud, Battle of 91
 UK, *see* Great Britain
 Ukraine 184, 333
 ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb 295, 495
 Umayyads 367
 United Nations 42, 158, 203, 215,
 299, 332–33, 346, 414, 441, 455,
 463, 464, 476, 479, 484
 United Nations Relief and Work
 Agency (UNRWA) 42
 United States, *see* America
 Universal Declaration of Human
 Rights 333
 US Constitution 250, 440
 US House of Representatives 251,
 462–64
 US Senate 251, 462
 USA, *see* America
 USS Liberty 253
 USS Maddox 436
 USS Maine 123, 435
 USSR, *see* Soviet Union
 usury, *see* *ribā*

V

variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
 (vCJD) 156
 Vatican, the 13, 19, 40, 52, 113, 118,
 121–22
 Holy See 242
 Vega, *see* Alpha Lyrae
 Vietnam 123, 424, 436, 442, 481
 Vinogradov, Vladimir 425
 Viral gastroenteritis 155, 450
 Vlaams Blok 403, 484
 Voltaire 413, 422

W

al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik 410
 Wall Street 73, 327

Wallace, Alfred Russel 274, 468
 Walt Disney Company 411
 Wang Ch’ung 70, 420
 War on Terror, the 124, 251
 War, First Gulf, *see* Iran-Iraq War
 War, Second Gulf 86, 123, 416, 428,
 436
 Warner Brothers 411
 Warsh, Kevin 411
 Washington 13, 17, 19, 38–41, 44–45,
 52, 76, 141, 184, 204, 250–53, 395,
 413–14, 428, 442, 449, 452–55,
 461–62, 478
 Weinstein, Bob 411
 Weinstein, Harvey 411
 West, Cornel 149, 448
 West, the 3, 6, 19, 21, 25, 73, 103,
 128, 148, 172, 176, 179–80, 196,
 209, 235, 301, 366, 368, 380–81,
 397, 410, 415, 418, 427, 437, 480
 Western iv, 18, 25, 31, 38, 44, 61,
 65, 68–71, 89, 123, 125, 128, 144,
 146, 149, 156, 158, 176, 179,
 180–83, 199–203, 209, 212, 215,
 229, 279, 284, 288, 303, 306, 333,
 346, 360, 366–71, 378–82, 387,
 398, 400–02, 412, 415, 424–25,
 437, 444, 471–72, 477
 Western civilization iv, 71, 123, 146,
 203, 209, 303, 367–71, 382
 westernization 427
 Westoxic 302
 White House 13, 41, 44
 Whittier, John Greenleaf 61
 Wilderness Society 395
 World Bank 38, 177–81, 353, 454, 478
 International Bank for Reconstruc-
 tion and Development 179, 414
 World Health Organization 346, 432,
 476
 World Trade Center 436
 World War II (WWII) 123, 180, 346,
 400, 424, 435, 447, 481
 Worms 154, 155, 165, 451
 Wye River Accords 42, 415

X

Xenophanes 67, 418

Y

Yahūd 3, 4, 10–22, 31–34, 42, 45,
47–49, 54, 63, 72, 76, 82, 87, 98,
104–05, 111, 113, 115, 143, 145,
167, 173, 264–65
Yahūdī vii, 6, 11–12, 15–21, 27, 34,
38, 41–44, 47, 49–52, 55, 82, 98,
117, 173, 175, 352, 359, 377
Yaḥyá ibn Waththāb 82, 427
Yandarbiyev, Zemlikhan 430
Yeltsin, Boris 430
Yemen 72, 425
Yugoslavia 301, 401–02

Z

al-Zamakhsharī xv, xvi
Zayd ibn Ḥārith 334
Zayd ibn Thābit 475
Zaynab bint Jaḥsh 334
Zimbabwe 95, 333, 432–33, 439–40
Zionism 18, 301, 372, 410, 414, 437
 Zionist 2, 42, 44–45, 85, 182, 184,
 202, 324, 410, 414–15, 471
 Zionist Israel, *see* Israel
 Zionist State, *see* Israel
Zoroastrianism 412
Zucker, Jeff 411
al-Zuḥaylī, Dr. Wahbah xvi, 453, 473,
475

Index of Arabic Words

A

'abd 42, 91, 117–18, 122, 295, 303–04, 410, 415, 426–27, 434, 470, 475–76, 477, 481, 487
adhān 107, 239, 329, 487
Ahl al-Kitāb 45, 487
 People of the Book 43, 65, 487
al-ākhirah 465, 487
'alim 117, 155, 279, 291, 330, 334, 481, 488
Allāhu akbar 85, 338, 488
'amilū al-ṣālihāt 162, 488
āminū 488
amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa nahī 'an al-munkar
 116, 488
amwāl al-nās 252, 488
Anṣār 20, 106, 280, 488
 Anṣārī 91, 303, 473
arḍ 130, 277, 488
Asāf 106, 108
al-ashhur al-ḥurum 4, 261, 293, 310, 488
 months of sanctity 4
asmā' al-ḥusnā 66, 489

'Aṣr 20, 489, 499
āyah 1, 6, 10–13, 20, 21, 23, 28, 33, 37, 39–40, 43, 46, 48, 51, 53, 65, 74, 76–77, 80, 83–84, 92–93, 95–96, 105–11, 113, 126, 128, 130, 132, 140, 143, 145, 147, 151, 153, 160, 163–64, 167, 169, 172–78, 184, 186, 195–96, 203–08, 210, 214–16, 218, 220, 222, 227–29, 232–39, 249–50, 269, 273–74, 276–78, 280–81, 300, 305, 308, 314–15, 317–19, 326–27, 329, 334, 336–38, 345–46, 349–50, 354, 358–59, 363, 375, 384, 405, 407, 409, 489
āyāt 1–4, 10, 12, 17, 19–20, 22, 34, 38, 41–42, 44–47, 51–53, 61–62, 64, 72–73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 91, 95, 98, 102, 104, 106–07, 111, 116, 121, 127–32, 136, 138, 143, 150, 161–62, 164, 168, 195, 210, 215–16, 218, 221, 226–27, 230, 232, 236–38, 249, 254–55, 260–62, 269, 271–74, 278, 286,

293, 297, 300, 308, 310, 312,
314–18, 322, 324–25, 331, 337,
339, 343–45, 350–51, 353–54,
375, 385, 388–89, 401, 405,
409–10, 474, 489

āyāt bayyināt 271, 489
mansūkh 227, 496

B

al-baḥīrah 153, 489

al-Bayt al-Ḥarām, *see* al-Masjid
al-Ḥarām

Bayt al-Maqdis, *see* Masjid al-Aqṣā
bid'ah 47, 64, 279, 433, 489

bid'ah ḥasanah 489

birr viii, 105, 172, 175, 281, 489

bismillāhi al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm 129, 489

D

da'wah ix, 43, 78, 80, 113, 293, 298,
354, 359, 426, 470, 490

dhabh 154, 164, 166, 490

dhabīḥah 161, 163, 490

dhawi al-qurbā 177, 490

dhikr 234, 325–26, 490

dhirā' 433, 490

Dhū al-Hijjah 278, 283, 290–91,

320–22, 328, 330, 338, 433, 488

Dhū al-Majāz 326, 336

Dhū al-Qa'dah 283, 321–22, 433, 488

dirham 215, 457

dīn viii, xvi, 19, 49, 82, 97–98, 105,

188, 194–95, 221, 223, 230, 232,

258, 262, 293, 299, 305, 308–09,

474, 490, 494

dīnār 214–15, 457

ḍiyāh 206, 208, 490

du'ā' 34, 53, 193, 234, 307, 490

F

fāḥishah 84, 86, 490

Fajr 85, 234, 237, 239–40, 328,

490–91, 499

al-fajr al-kādhīb 237, 491

farḍ 85, 247, 491

Fatḥ 223, 225, 491

fi al-riqāb 177, 491

fiqh 45, 470, 477, 491

faqīh 164, 166, 214, 221–23, 226,

279, 322, 330, 367, 408, 474, 481,

491

fiqh 162, 164, 214, 223, 226, 246,

328, 338, 475, 489, 495

fi sabilillāh 304, 312, 491

fitnah 21, 288, 293, 298, 305–08, 491

fitrah 268, 491

G

ghayb 491, 495

ghaybi 351

ghusl 88, 491

H

hadith xv, 38, 45, 66, 81, 90, 106,

164–66, 223, 225, 233, 237, 239,

245–46, 280, 303, 318, 325, 328,

331, 430, 435, 453, 458, 470–71,

476–77, 491, 499, 501

Hadith, the 45, 90, 470–71, 477, 491

ḥadīth qudsī 245, 491

ḥāfiẓ 56, 474, 491

Hajj ix, 4, 34, 46–47, 104, 106–07,

110, 176, 255, 260–61, 264, 266,

280–81, 283, 290–92, 312–39, 342,

349, 433

ḥalāl 104, 142, 154, 157, 159, 161, 164,

169, 492

al-ḥamdu lillāh 42, 487

hamī 492

Ḥanafī 164–66, 318

Ḥanbalī 166, 318

ḥaqq 46, 54, 89, 98, 116, 219, 492

Ḥaram, *see* al-Masjid al-Ḥarām

Ḥaramayn 18

ḥarām 104, 142, 160, 164, 169, 492,

499

Ḥarb al-Basūs 211, 492

ḥayāt al-raḥm 354, 492

hijrah 350

Hijrah, the 10–11, 227, 282, 296,

315–19, 474, 496

ḥikmah 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 492

ḥilāl 278, 284, 291, 492

al-Hilm al-'Arabī, see *The Arab Dream*
 Holy House in Jerusalem, see *Masjid al-Aqṣá*
 Holy Sanctuary, see *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*
 House of Allah, see *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*
al-Hums 333

I

'*ibādah* 194, 255, 270, 281, 327, 492
Ibādiyyah 167
ibn al-sabil 177, 492
 'Īd 107, 279, 283, 291, 348, 350
 'Īd al-Aḍḥá 291
 'Īd al-Fitr 279
 'iddah 266, 291, 492
 ifāḍah 325, 334, 492
 iftār 235–36, 407, 492
 ihlāl 317, 319, 321, 493
 iḥrām 266, 317, 319, 321–22, 324, 333,
 335, 493, 502
 iḥsān 175, 312, 493
 iḥṣār 319, 320, 493
 ijihād 167, 171, 206, 215, 489, 493
 'ilm 35, 493
 imān 5, 8, 20, 96, 105, 107, 176–77,
 185, 264, 281, 303, 389, 493
 imsāk 237, 239, 407, 493
 infāq 215, 493
 inshā'allāh 72, 383
 Inviolable House, see *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*
iqāmat al-ṣalāh 175–76, 184, 493
 iqāmah 329
 'Ishā' 85, 329, 494, 499
istiḡfār 325, 494
 i'tikāf 193, 234, 247, 494
ittaqaw 387, 388, 494
ittaqillāh 354, 494

J

Ja'fariyah 167
jāhiliyah 19, 52, 106–08, 138, 195–96,
 260, 263–65, 295, 314, 329, 335,
 366, 489, 494
jāhili 106–08, 196, 261–64, 280, 296,

326, 339, 342, 355, 360, 366
jamā'ah 1, 494
Jannah 409
jihād ix, 42, 86–87, 90–91, 227,
 293–94, 297, 299, 300–02, 307,
 309–12, 318, 363, 409, 437, 477,
 494, 497
Jumādā 283, 465
Jumu'ah 107, 348, 494, 496
juz' 1, 410, 494

K

Ka'bah, see *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*
kāffatan 364, 494
kāfir, see *kufr*
khalīfah 144, 268, 495
khalīfah 67, 272, 356, 495
 khalīfah al-rāshidah 356, 495
al-kitāb 45, 57, 61, 487, 495
kufr viii, 5, 19, 24, 44, 50, 64–65, 67,
 72–73, 84, 86, 104, 125, 306–08, 310,
 314, 364, 369, 471, 494, 495, 497
kāfir 5, 27, 44, 50–51, 63, 67, 72, 74,
 76–77, 79, 82, 86–87, 125–26,
 176, 293, 300, 305, 307–08, 315,
 386, 494

L

al-ladhina āmanū 195, 228, 231–32, 488
la'nah 126, 495
Laylah al-Qadr 290, 495

M

Maghrib 234, 239, 329, 496, 499
 Majnah 326, 336
makrūh 165
 Mālikī 165–66, 426, 477
mansūkh, see *āyah*
al-Marwah viii, 98, 104–10, 318, 326,
 433, 499
al-masākin 177, 496
masjid viii, 4, 9–11, 13–14, 20, 32–37,
 39–41, 44, 46–49, 51–53, 55, 63, 77,
 104, 176, 193, 228, 234, 247, 260,
 263, 270, 293, 305, 307, 311,
 313–14, 319, 333–34, 349, 433,
 474, 494, 496–97, 502

Masjid al-Aqṣá 11, 14, 20
 Bayt al-Maḳdis 20, 173
 Holy House in Jerusalem 20
 al-Masjid al-Ḥarām viii, 4, 9, 11, 20,
 32–37, 39, 40–41, 44, 46–53, 55,
 104, 293, 305, 307, 311, 319, 433,
 474, 496
 al-Bayt al-Ḥarām 28, 173, 496
 Ḥaram 496
 Ḥaramayn 18
 Holy Sanctuary 28, 290, 318, 326
 House of Allah 13, 325, 496
 Inviolable House 20, 28, 255 259,
 496
 Ka'bah 10, 11, 13, 20, 34, 39, 67, 81,
 107, 110, 296, 314–17, 321, 334,
 433, 496
 al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām 313, 325, 327,
 329
mawlá 91, 326, 334, 496
minbar 63, 496
miqāt 321, 496
mufassir xv, 496
muhaddith 501
 Muhājirūn 106, 496
 al-Muḥarram 283, 488
muḥarramāt 143, 162, 163, 497
mujāhid 497
mu'mins 332, 355
munāfiq 76, 219, 497
munkar 84, 86, 116, 294, 488, 497
muḳaddasāt 12, *see* Kodashim
muṣalli 83, 85, 497
mushrik,
see shirk
mu'takif 247, 497
muttaqī 64, 214, 325, 497

N

nabī 409
nafs 78–79, 497
nahr 315, 328, 338, 497, 502–03
 Nā'ilah 106, 108
 Naṣarā 45, 497
nastaghfir-allāh 70, 112, 117, 119, 497
nawāfil 85, 498
nikāh 266, 498
ni'mah 53, 498

Q

Qārūnī 255
qiblah viii, 2–6, 8–22, 27–41, 44–56,
 63–66, 72, 76–79, 82, 84, 87,
 104–107, 111, 172–175, 317, 329,
 498
qiṣāṣ viii, 194, 196, 203–06, 209–14,
 498
qitāl 42, 218, 293, 498
qunfudh 166

R

al-Raḥīm 128–29, 489, 498
 al-Raḥmān 42, 91, 128–29, 303–04,
 415, 475–77, 489, 498
al-ra'is al-mu'min 178, 498
 Rajab 283, 465, 488
rak'ah 85, 498
 Ramaḍān ix, 125, 176, 192, 217, 220,
 222–23, 225–35, 240, 244, 245–49,
 254–55, 266, 278–79, 283, 290–92,
 314, 433, 495, 502
rasūl 409
 al-Razzāq 152, 498
ribā 456
 usury 56, 151, 408
rizq 389–90, 498
rukū' 498

S

ṣabr 78–84, 87, 499
ṣabran 303
ṣadaqaḥ 205, 215, 312, 320, 493, 499
sadd al-dharā'i' 222, 499
 al-Ṣafā viii, 98, 104–10, 318, 433, 499
 Ṣaḥīḥs, the two 66, 280, 499
sa'i 108, 111, 321, 499
al-sā'ibah 153, 449, 499
al-sā'ilin 177, 499
sajdah 228, 233, 499
sujūd 496, 499
 Salafis 63, 64, 489
ṣalāh 9–13, 18, 20, 30–34, 40, 55,
 74–87, 109, 175–76, 184, 218, 224,
 234, 239–40, 294, 328, 338–39, 366,
 426, 435, 470, 487–90, 493, 496–99,
 500

samā' 276, 499
samāwāt 130–31, 499
ṣawm 193, 218–19, 230, 240, 244–49,
 321, 339, 499
sha'ā'ir 107, 222, 500
Sha'bān 279, 283
Shāfi'is 166, 318
shahādah 87, 89–91, 339, 500
shahid 77, 88–89, 300, 500
Shari'ah 213, 300, 477, 481, 500
shar'i 246, 292, 490–91, 500
Shawwāl 321, 322, 433
Shr'i 358, 416, 426, 481, 483
shirk 55, 161, 283, 288, 314, 329, 471,
 500, 503
mushrik 42, 47–48, 63, 91, 96, 105,
 143, 145, 153, 264–65, 297, 300,
 308, 310, 314–15, 317, 319, 326,
 328–29, 465, 470, 474, 497, 503
silṣ 361, 500
Sirah 10, 23, 63, 500
al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm 500
sufahā' 18, 501
sunnah 85, 501
sunan 453–54, 457–59, 473, 475,
 501
Sunnah, the 23–27, 44, 49, 51, 63, 171,
 187, 216, 237, 247, 301, 303, 318,
 323, 407–08, 489, 493, 501
Sunnīs 358, 426
sūrah iv, v, vii, 1, 42, 98, 111, 115, 119,
 164, 210, 215–16, 238, 262–63, 294,
 297, 303, 310, 315–16, 322, 410,
 474, 489, 501
Sūrah al-Aḥzāb v
Sūrah al-A'rāf 115
Sūrah al-Baqarah iv, vii, 1, 10, 42, 75,
 98, 104, 193, 210, 260, 322, 342,
 410, 489
Sūrah al-Barā'ah 297, 310, 315
Sūrah Fuṣṣilat 238
Sūrah al-Ḥajj 294, 474
Sūrah al-Mā'idah 42, 164, 210
Sūrah Maryam 119
Sūrah al-Tawbah 238, 297, 310

T

tadhkiyah 165, 501
tafsir iv–v, xvi, 64, 75, 116, 413, 453,
 465, 470, 473, 475, 501
tāghūt 501
tāghūti 231, 355, 501
tamattu' 321, 501
taqwā viii, 14, 175, 189, 193, 211–13,
 216–22, 226, 230–32, 244–48,
 259–62, 281, 302, 304, 311, 322,
 325, 327, 338, 353, 357, 387–90, 502
tarāwīḥ 85, 502
tashriq 338, 502
tawāf 314, 317, 321, 326, 334, 433, 502
tawḥid 35, 55, 502

U

al-udḥiyah 338, 502
'Ukāz 326, 336
ummah 5, 23–24, 41, 44, 267, 295, 357,
 390, 502
Ummah viii, 2–6, 16, 19–27, 34–35,
 39, 44–52, 76–79, 84, 86–87, 93,
 186, 205, 218, 236, 250, 254–55,
 260, 263, 265, 280, 297, 310, 317,
 330, 335, 358, 363–64, 367, 410,
 427, 470, 502
ummatan wasatā 3, 23–27, 41, 502
'Umrah 46, 106–07, 176, 260, 266,
 312, 314–15, 317–21, 323–25, 335,
 349, 433, 493, 499, 501–02
'uṣbah 207, 502

W

Wahhābis 63, 64
waṣīyah viii, 193, 214, 216–17, 502
wirāthah 215, 502

Y

yarzuqu 389, 503
yatabayyana 238, 239, 503
al-yatāmā 177, 503
Yawm 'Arafāt 291, 330–31, 503
Yawm al-Naḥr 328, 338, 502–03

Z

zakāh 103, 172, 215, 219, 255, 291,
294, 321, 339, 470, 493, 503

ẓālim 126, 503

Zamzam 109

Zaydiyyah 167

Zuhr 499

ẓulm 360, 503

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